

TERRORISM, MEDIA AND PUBLIC PERCEPTION: INFLUENCE OF MEDIA ON
PUBLIC PERCEPTION ON TERRORISM RELATED MATTERS

Andrea K. Ivanova, B.A.

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APPROVED:

Scott Belshaw, Major Professor
Mark Saber, Committee Member
Maureen McGuinness, Committee Member
Eric Fritsch, Chair of the Department of
Criminal Justice
Linda Holloway, Interim Dean of the College of
Health and Public Service
Victor Prybutok, Dean of the Toulouse
Graduate School

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The purpose of this study is to measure and examine whether terrorism continues to be highly feared and over-predicted, whether exposure to mass or news media influences perceptions of terrorism, whether mass media remains a significant source of information on terrorism related matters and whether people are prepared to act in the event of a terrorist attack. The respondents in this research consisted of a sample of 135 students aged 18 and over, at a participating mid-size university in a southern state, who completed a self-reported online survey on voluntary basis. The findings of the study suggests that the respondents access terrorism related news-media on both weekly and daily basis. Those with frequent access tend to overestimate the likelihood of a domestic terrorist attack and the threat posed by terrorism and tend to show higher levels of fear associated with terrorism. The majority of the respondents indicated average access of news-media of once or twice a week, or no use at all and they tend to not overestimate the likelihood of a terrorist attack, indicate some or no fear in relation to terrorism and tend to have more accurate perception of the current threat posed by terrorism.

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I want to dedicate this thesis to my departed grandfather, who inspired me to pursue my goals and complete my graduate degree. I would also like to thank my supportive parents for their patience and encouragement throughout this process. Without their help, I would not be where I am today. I would also like to thank Dr. Belshaw, Dr. Saber and Dr. McGuinness for their guidance and support throughout the thesis process.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Introduction to the Problem

In the last few years terrorist attacks across the world have started to slowly increase. The most recent terrorist attack on America soil occurred on October 31, 2017 in Manhattan, New York. Investigation on the attack is ongoing, however it was declared to be a homegrown terrorist attack within a day of the event in the media by politician and officials, such as President Trump and the Mayor of New York. Despite the increase in attacks, our understanding of this phenomenon, its root causes, how best to control it and the ability to predict when and where a terrorist will attack remains modest (Kluch & Vaux, 2016; Webb & Cutter, 2009). To this day, there is no single or universally accepted definition of terrorism, even amongst United States governmental agencies definitions of terrorism differ (Berkebile, 2017; Jenkins, 2006). Scholars argue that the difficulty in defining terrorism is due to the fact that there is no single form or act considered to be terrorism, however there are common traits (Reichel, 2013).

Terrorism is often very violent, and it is an event that is spontaneous and unexpected which can be carried out with or without serious planning (Berkebile, 2017). Scholars have concluded that terrorist use fear and intimidation to achieve either politically, religiously, ideologically or socially motivated goals, and that victims, targets and locations are carefully selected to ensure influence, not only over the immediate victims and witness, but also the majority of society across the world (Klavec, 2014; Nunn, 2007). Overall the events are designed to evoke fear and intimidation within the public, seize media headline, cause disruptions to daily lives, result in a number of fatalities and numerous injured victims (Jenkins, 2006). Today religiously motivated terrorism has gained worldwide focus, in particular, Islam inspired violence through jihad propaganda campaigning for purification and a worldwide Islamic state which is justified and rationalized through the promise of martyrdom (Nunn, 2007; Post, McGinnis &

Moody, 2014; Shughart, 2006). At the moment, the use of improvised explosive devices, homemade explosives, suicide attacks and more recently use of vehicles to run over people in crowded areas, appear to be the most common attacks terrorists engage in (Kluch & Vaux, 2016).

Despite the constant debate over the most appropriate definition, we sure know what terrorism is when we see it or experience it, whether it is international or domestic (Kaplan, 2011). In the United States, Title 18 of the United States Code, Chapter 113B §2331 defines terrorism as violent acts or acts dangerous to human life that are a violation of the criminal laws of the United States and those acts appear to be intended either to intimidate or coerce civilian population, or influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion, or to affect the conduct of a government by mass destruction, assassination or kidnapping. The main difference between international and domestic terrorism is whether the activities occur within or outside of the territorial jurisdiction of the United States (18 U.S.C. §2331). For example, domestic terrorism occurs when a terrorist attack is carried out within the United States, by an American citizen or resident whose victims are the citizens of the United States (Berkebile, 2017).

Homegrown terrorists are a key component in domestic terrorism. Homegrown terrorists or lone wolves are individuals who either work alone or within a small group of people. Variety of activities fall under homegrown terrorism, such as: joining or training with foreign terrorist groups, providing material and financial support to terrorist organizations, preparation of terror attacks and the engagement in terrorist attacks against the United States (Brooks, 2011). Lone wolves are individuals who are inspired by the global jihadist movement and propaganda and are either self-radicalized for own personal reasons or radicalized by terrorist recruiters (Brooks, 2011; Weissman, Busch & Schouten, 2014). Scholars have identified three types of lone wolves based on their association with terrorist groups: the loners (individuals that act without any direct ties to a terror organization), the lone wolves (some formal and informal ties to terror groups) and wolf packs (small group sharing the same ideological beliefs) (Capellan, 2015). Recent

research shows that lone wolves are more likely to attack civilian targets, disproportionately use firearms and vehicles to carry out their attack, and that lone wolves never truly act alone (Becker, 2014). In most cases these individuals have had some contact, communication or access to extremist and propaganda material, terrorist training, educational manuals or other self- radicalized materials (Becker, 2014).

In the last couple of years, homegrown terrorists have simultaneously engaged in both vehicle rummage and use of firearms when carrying out terrorist attacks, however according to most recent research firearm assaults remains as one of the most common methods used (Kluch & Vaux, 2016). Terrorists who engage in a firearm assault are also referred to as ‘active shooters’. An active shooter is an individual who engages in killing or attempting to kill people in a confined and populated area, and in most cases, they use firearms with no particular selection of victims (Capellan, 2015; Frazzano & Snyder, 2014). The United States first acknowledged the potential danger of homegrown terrorists and declared that lone wolves and small cell terrorists represent significant threat to the national security of the United States, following the 2008 Mumbai terrorist attack (Capellan, 2015). The most recent terrorist attack in the United States, where the terrorist engaged in an armed assault was the 2016 Orlando Nightclub shooting, where the attacker claimed allegiance to the Islamic State (IS) and fatally shot 49 individuals and wounding at least 53.

Terrorist events in the United States are not as common when compared to other parts of the world, and when compared to the rest of the world and other western countries, terrorism in America seems like a rare event (Klarevas, 2011). Despite the rare occurrence, the threat of an international or domestic terrorist attack remains high for the United States (Klarevas, 2011; Spaaij & Hamm, 2015). As Becker (2014) points out, terrorist incident, as well as group-based terrorist attacks continue to decline in frequency in the United States, however lone wolf terrorism has been increasing, especially in the recent decade.

The threat perceived by the American public following 9/11 has shifted throughout the years. The threat is no longer coming solely from articulated jihadists organizations or designated terrorist organizations (See Appendix A), but from homegrown terrorists (Hoffman, 2015). Terrorism is one of the handful of acts and events where it is universally agreed upon to be gravely and distinctively wrong and unjustifiable (Donahue, 2013). Terrorism has become a global phenomenon that instils fear over the fact that a terrorist attack can happen anywhere at any time (Frazzano & Snyder, 2014). Mass media is the primary source of information for the public that provides knowledge about terrorism, consequently influencing public understanding and emotion toward terrorism, such as fear and anxiety (Chermak, 2003). It is the mass media who report to the public about the violence and other matters in relation to terrorism, however the prolonged media coverage of these events skews the public perception of actual risk, which in turn increases the level of anxiety and fear of another attack (Egnoto, Griffin, Svetieva & Winslow, 2016; Iqbal, 2015).

Since 9/11 the Department of Homeland Security and other agencies have invested significant amount of resources aimed at investigating and monitoring terrorist activity within the United States, however with the emerging trends of social media and other technological developments, the communication, planning and recruitment of terrorists becomes easier and counterterrorism measure become less effective (Brooks, 2011; Zalman, n.d.). Jihadi extremists are actively looking to replicate the Mumbai attacks on American soil, and at the same time Al Qaeda, Islamic State (IS) and other terrorist organizations use social media platforms to spread propaganda and extremist materials such as videos and magazines which aim to radicalize American citizens and encourage them to engage in lone wolf attacks in their home countries (Hoffman, 2015). This has consequently lead to homegrown terrorists targeting populated public places and engaging in firearms assaults, vehicle rummaging or both (Capellan, 2015; Hoffman, 2015).

The domestic terrorist threat is currently emphasized by the Department of Homeland Security in their recent advisory bulletin. According to the bulletin, the United States is facing the most serious terrorism threat since 9/11, where the threat today is more complex and diverse, and terrorist now more than ever have the means to cause mass casualties in a single attack (Homeland Security, 2017; Klarevas, 2011). The bulletin emphasizes concerns over terrorist groups continuous exploitation of the internet to inspire, enable and direct individuals who are already in the United States to commit terrorist act (Homeland Security, 2017). This was clearly demonstrated by the most recent attack on the United States in October 2017, by the ISIS inspired lone wolf who ran over people and cyclists with a car, killing eight and injuring 11. One thing is clear, the global war on terror declared by G. W. Bush 16 years ago, is far from over.

Significance

According to the Global Terrorism Database (GTD) (2017), there were 1281 domestic terrorist attacks in the 1970's, 453 attacks in the 1980's, 298 attacks in the 1990's, 180 attacks between 2000 and 2010, and 147 attacks reported between 2011 and 2016. Even though terrorist events have significantly declined since the 1970's, the global war on terror is far from over, and domestic terrorism is a clear and present danger to the United States (Randahl, 2016). During the past decade, there has been an increase in violent terrorist incidents carried out by individuals who do not belong to and are not directly linked to terrorist organizations abroad (Post et al, 2014). Recent research suggests that in the last decade there has been an increase in the number of firearms attacks carried out by terrorists in the United States, however despite the increase, these attacks continue to be rare (Capellan, 2015). The two most recent successful homegrown attacks in the United States were the 2016 Orlando Nightclub shooting that left 49 killed and

53 injured (Galily, Yarchi, Tamir & Samuel-Arzan, 2016) and most recently the 2017 New York vehicle rummage killing eight and injuring 11.

Educational institutions are often considered as targets by terrorists, because of their ‘soft target’ status. Educational institutions can be particularly vulnerable to attacks due to the relatively unguarded sites where large number of people congregate, consequently providing an opportunity for mass casualty (Bradford & Wilson, 2013; Petkova, Martinez, Schlegelmilch & Redlener, 2017). It is difficult to protect educational institutions from acts of terrorism, however there are certain measures taken to ensure safety on campuses. Universities and higher education facilities must comply with the federal handbook for campus safety and security, which encompasses the precautions needed to be taken in accordance with the Clery Act of 1990 (Clery Center, 2018). To ensure compliance universities are required to publish annual reports discussing relevant issues, such as: access and security of campus facilities, and the emergency responses, evacuation and notifications (Annual Security and Fire Safety Report, 2018).

Even though terrorist attacks on educational facilities evoke strong emotional responses by the public and extensive media coverage, the real threat is minimal and attacks occur rarely (Bradford & Wilson, 2013). According to the GTD (2017) six terrorist attacks occurred between 1970 and 2016 where an educational institution was targeted. Three of the attacks occurred in the 1970’s and one in 1994 (Global Terrorism Database, 2017). The third incident is the most recent firearm terrorist attack at an educational facility in the United States, which occurred in 2013 at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), where a police officer was fatally shot on campus by the ‘Tsarnev brothers’, who are believed to be responsible for the 2013 Boston Marathon bombing (Global Terrorism Database, 2017). In addition, a more recent terrorist attack on an educational facility, was the 2016 Ohio State University attack, where the attacker, a Somali refugee engaged in vehicle-ramming and stabbing of students on campus, injuring 11. The attacker was inspired by the Islamic State propaganda, and the group later claimed responsibility

(Global Terrorism Database, 2017). When a terrorist attack occurs, it has profound effect on domestic political debates over the threat of terrorism and national security (Randahl, 2016). So far, the government has been able to detect and stop majority of terrorist attacks occurring on American soil and most plots have been foiled due to various counterterrorism strategies, however the potential of authorities to continue to detect and prevent terrorist activity is still in its initial phases (Brooks, 2011).

When engaging in terrorist attacks, terrorist often aspire to create mass fear and plan their attacks in a manner that would attract and ensure extensive media coverage. This is often achieved through indiscriminate death and massive destruction of property (Shughart, 2006). Modern societies discuss political conceptions such as terrorism, that are primarily created through the mass media, which serves as a primary channel for information about terrorism (Crenshaw, 1995). The way the public forms their judgement and general opinions, is important for understanding the cognitive effects of the media framing on the development of attitudes (Brinson & Stohl, 2012). Constant exposure to certain media frames during an event that evokes great fear in the public, can influence their perception of threat, in effect swaying their attitudes towards more aggressive counterterrorism measures allowing the opportunity for expansion of executive authority and national security policies (Brinson & Stohl, 2012; Brooks, 2011). As former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher said, “publicity provides the oxygen that terrorist breath” (Hoffman, 2015).

There have been no further catastrophic events as big as 9/11, however there have been further successful homegrown attacks on American soil since then (Jenkins, 2017). With the global increase of terrorist attacks, it appears that the American people have accepted the notion of permanent and ongoing war against terror where fear of further terror attacks has become a permanent feature of American psyche (Jenkins, 2017). It is crucial to have an updated knowledge of public perceptions of domestic terrorism and how the mass media has aided in shaping those particular ideas, beliefs and stereotypes, especially

when those attitudes influence the individual support for counterterrorism measures proposed by the government (Brinson & Stohl, 2012; Brooks, 2011). In addition to examining the public beliefs, attitudes and understanding of terrorism, it is also important to examine whether the public is prepared to react in the event of a terrorist attack, especially since there is great amount of fear associated with it. Even though there is minimal threat to educational facilities posed by terrorist attacks, there is still a likelihood of the event occurring. In most cases, the threat presents itself as an ‘active shooter’, which are completely distinct from many crisis situations due to the ambiguous nature of the crisis (Egnoto et al, 2016). It is often unclear whether there is real danger or not, and there is often uncertainty about the location of the shooter and how many people are involved. In addition, it is difficult to determine the best course of action by students and faculty, in fact most of the student community is unaware of the steps they need to take to ensure their safety in such situation (Egnoto et al, 2016). To address this issue the participating North Texas university maintains an online information page that provides online guidance on how students can respond in the event of a terrorist attack, in particular an armed assault.

Purpose of Study

Through the use of an online survey, the purpose of this study is to measure and examine whether terrorism continues to be highly feared and overpredicted, whether exposure to news media influences perceptions of terrorism, whether media remains a significant source of information on terrorism related matters and whether people are prepared to act in the event of a terrorist attack. The respondents in this research consisted of a sample of students aged 18 and over at a mid-size university in a southern state. To ensure the age requirement, the invitation email clearly stated that participation requires 18 years of age, and before beginning the survey the respondents were asked to confirm their age.

Considering current literature and body of research on the media influence of public perception of terrorism and the threat it poses, four research questions are posed.

- 1) Does following news media reports on terrorism related matters, influence the way people perceive terrorism and terrorists?
- 2) Do those who follow news media reporting on terrorism, anticipate a higher likelihood of a terrorist attack occurring and are they more fearful than those who do not follow news media reporting?
- 3) Is news/mass media the primary source of information on terrorist related events, or has social media taken over?
- 4) Is majority of the sample unaware of what actions to take in the event of a terrorist attack?

Conclusion

In the last decade, homegrown terrorism has increased (Brooks, 2011). Despite minimal occurrences in the United States, American citizens tend to overestimate the risk of future terrorist attack and disproportionately conclude that either themselves or family members are likely to be victims in future terrorist attacks (Braithwaite, 2013). Scholars argue the reasoning behind the constant level of fear among the American population is due to prolonged global media coverage, which in effect skews the public perception of the threat levels. Consequently, increasing levels of anxiety and fear of terrorism (Egnoto et al, 2016; Iqbal, 2015).

Most recent research, does show that majority of the population continues to significantly fear terrorism and worry about becoming a victim of a terrorist attack (Braithwaite, 2013; LaFree, Presses, Tourangeau & Adamczyk, 2013; Nacos, Bloch-Elkon & Shapiro, 2008), however these finding are becoming outdated therefore a more current analysis is needed. Considering the available research, terrorism literature lacks current research on public perception of terrorism and the treat it poses. There is very limited current research that examines whether media remains a primary source of information for the public on terrorism, and if so whether it continues to instill fear and false sense of insecurity. More

current research is also needed on public perception of homegrown terrorism and whether the public feels prepared in the event of a terrorist attack.

The following chapters will discuss related current literature and research on terrorism, and the research methods of the study. Chapter 2 specifically looks at the current research on public perceptions and understanding of terrorism, the media reporting of terrorism and its influence on public perceptions and counterterrorism measures. Chapter 3 will discuss the research design, the survey and method of data analysis.

CHAPTER 2

RELATED LITERATURE

Public Perception and Understanding of Terrorism

Influencing Public Perception

Terrorism is a generalized construct derived from our concepts of morality, law and rules of war. Often the questions of what terrorism is, what causes it and how we should combat it, help co-construct public perception of the phenomenon (Jackson, Jarvis, Gunning & Breen-Smyth, 2011; Jenkins, 2006). On the other hand, perception and understanding of terrorists is shaped by popular culture, ideology and politics (Jenkins, 2006). During the French revolution, terrorism was not associated with negative connotations, instead it was seen as a local program and agency of destruction and death. In modern day, terrorism has reached a global status due to its effect on the West, coupled with the use of dramatic and unexpected events causing mass casualty and destruction, all designed to capture public, media and political attention (Heath & Waymer, 2014). Public perception of terrorism and the threat posed shifts as time passes. For example, during the Bush administration the terrorist threat was coming from abroad, however there was shift during the Obama administration where it became clear that foreign terrorists do not pose significant threat to the United States. Instead there is more threat posed by homegrown and self-radicalized individuals (Nacos et al, 2008). The same threat remains today and even though there are significantly less casualties from homegrown terrorist attacks, the United States population are almost as worried about terrorism as they were following the 9/11 attacks (Jenkins, 2017). In order to address fear and anxiety in the public over terrorism, President Trump has issued and recently passed a travel ban for individuals who are traveling from designated countries known for terrorist activity and training (See Appendix B) (Jenkins, 2017).

Mass media has become the primary source of information for the public, which provides the ideas about the world and largely shapes the public view with the stories that are repeatedly published (Nacos et al, 2008; Spencer, 2012). Scholars suggest that the media use of metaphor and ‘schemas’ have the potential to influence how an individual perceives social reality, their beliefs, attitudes and actions (Spencer, 2012). For example, when terrorism is viewed as a social construct, rather than a physical fact, terrorism is constituted through discourse, or in other words ‘we make terrorism what it is’, therefore what these people and their deeds mean is a matter of interpretation (Spencer, 2012). There is limited academic research on public attitudes towards terrorism and current surveys still do not provide a comprehensive baseline information about public belief and attitudes towards homegrown terrorism and counterterrorism (Braithwaite, 2013; LaFree et al, 2013). From what research there is, conclusive findings show that the majority of the public tend to overestimate the risk of future terrorist attack and disproportionately conclude that either themselves or family members are likely to be victims in future terrorist attacks (Braithwaite, 2013).

Public Threat and Risk Perception

The 9/11 attacks are a historical point in time for the United States, that caught the attention of the public and the United States government in relation to terrorism, like it had never done before. Even though there had been no further major terrorist attacks in the United States between 2001 and 2011 majority of the public persisted to worry and fear about a future attack on the United States (Bloch-Elkon, 2011). The 9/11 attacks also dramatically increased prejudice and discrimination against American Muslims. Recent research conducted by Steel, Parker & Lickel (2015) found that high-provocation conditions, such as extensive media coverage focused on Muslim leaders and terrorist organizations, increased bias and anger towards the Muslim general population. In their research, they concluded that

when the public perceives major threat coming from foreign terrorist organization and Muslim leaders, it significantly affects their beliefs and attitudes towards Muslims in general (Steel et al, 2015). Overall public opinion polls show that within a year following 9/11 the American public worried a great deal about a future terrorist attack on American soil, however at the same time public confidence remained strong in the government ability to prevent future attacks (Nacos et al, 2008). Interestingly public opinion did not shift significantly in the years to follow. In 2001, less than a month after the attack 71% of the public thought another terrorist incident is very likely or somewhat likely to occur in the US, similarly in October 2008, 68% of Americans express the same feelings. Even though between October 2001 and 2008 only 6% of the public were confident that a major terror attack is not likely to occur in the United States, over the years Americans have shown high degree of confidence in the governments' ability to prevent terrorist attacks on American soil (Nacos et al, 2008).

Similar findings have been found by Braithwaite (2013) who examined US attitudes towards the likelihood of terrorism between 2001 and 2010. Conclusive findings in the study show that the proportion of Americans anticipating further imminent attacks declined from 66% in 2001, to 60% in 2002, to 39% in 2010. On the other hand, for those same years a relatively high proportion of the population, 56% in 2001, 38% in 2002 and 42% in 2010 persisted to believe that either themselves or a family member will become a victim of a terrorist attack (Braithwaite, 2013). The data collected from the research conducted by Braithwaite (2013) indicates that even though there has been a decline in public fear of terrorism, every 4 out of 10 Americans feared further terrorist attacks and tend to overestimate the actual risk associated with terrorism.

A similar survey conducted on public perception of terrorism was completed by LaFree and colleagues (2013) from September through October of 2012, who surveyed 1,576 individuals, 18 years of age and older. Their findings show that among all respondent who had reported thoughts about terrorism

in the preceding week, 5% believed that a terrorist attack is extremely likely or very likely to happen in the United States, compared to 17% of the participants believed a terrorist attack is extremely unlikely (LaFree et al, 2013). In addition, they found that 43% of people who had thought about victimization in general also thought about being a victim of a terrorist attack, demonstrating the relationship between fear and overestimated threat perception (LaFree et al, 2013). Their results show that males and females equally thought about terrorism. There was more distinction among the age groups, where those aged 60 and over (21.3%) had thought about terrorism, compared to those aged 18 to 29 (7.4%) reported having thought about terrorism (LaFree et al, 2013). In relation to public confidence in the governments' ability to prevent future attacks, 37% believe all major attacks can be prevented, compared to 24.9% of the participants who believed that the government cannot prevent major attacks. Overall 69% of the participants endorsed the view that terrorists will always find a way to carry out major attacks no matter what the United States government does (LaFree et al, 2013). The conclusive findings from the study show that terrorism continues to resonate a significant threat to American citizens, especially for those who have been victims of other crimes or experience high levels of anxiety (LaFree et al, 2013).

A follow up study was conducted by Lafree (2013) in the Spring of 2013, where public attitudes were examined prior to and directly after the Boston Marathon bombings. A total of 1,173 respondents completed the survey prior to the attack and 302 respondents completed the survey immediately following the attack. Conclusive findings of the study indicate that there was no difference among those sampled prior to and following the bombings in relations to the proportion of respondents who had thought about the possibility of a terrorist attack in the United States (LaFree, 2013). However, the respondents who completed the survey following the attack assigned higher probability of a terrorist attack in the United States, 26% viewed an attack as somewhat, very or extremely likely, compared to 13% of the respondents who had the same view prior to the bombings. The 2013 bombings also seem to have had an effect on the

public confidence in the government, where only 22% of those who completed the survey following the attack viewed the government as effective in preventing future attacks, compared to the 31% of those who completed the survey prior to the attack who believed the government as very effective (LaFree, 2013).

The data discussed above provides some insight into the public attitude towards terrorism, which show that fear and perceived threat has not changed significantly in the years following 9/11 (Nacos et al, 2008). Majority of the American population tend to overestimate the threat of future terrorist attacks, but at the same time the majority also have faith in the government abilities in preventing future attacks (Bloch-Elkon, 2011; Braithwaite, 2013; LaFree et al, 2013). Overall a significant amount of the population today worries about terrorism and becoming a victim. The fear experienced plays a significant part in threat perception and likelihood of becoming a victim of a terrorist attack. Media plays a huge part in instilling fear and sense of insecurity due to the portrayal of the terrorist threat and the consistency of portraying terrorist events (Braithwaite, 2013). However, one thing that needs to be kept in mind, is that there have not been any recent studies conducted that examine public perception of the threat posed by terrorist. Considering that there has been a steady increase of homegrown terrorist events worldwide in the last few years, and the recent homegrown terrorist attack in New York city, it is expected that public threat perception and fear will remain high.

Fear and Threat Perception Effects on Counterterrorism Policies

One of the primary goals of terrorists is to inflict psychological harm upon public audiences, particularly provoking a sense of fear and insecurity within mass populations using unexpected violent and, in most cases, fatal attacks (Braithwaite, 2013). With the heightened media attention and prolonged reporting of the attacks, fear and anxiety in the public that is not directly harmed by the violence is ensured. Media images about risk and safety of the public, is central following a terrorist attack (Altheide, 2007). Importance of instilling fear in the public and destruction of daily lives, to terrorist is clearly illustrated by

the famous quote by Osama bin Laden “there is America, full of fear from north to south, from west to east. Thank god for that” (Bloch-Elkon, 2011). Terrorist are aware that 9/11 and the 2005 London 7/7 attacks continue to instill fear and anxiety among target population. On the other hand, recent homegrown terrorist attacks help maintain high levels of fear and anxiety among the public while anticipating the next attack (Braithwaite, 2013).

When planning their attacks, terrorists aim to convince the mass population that they can inflict damage on whoever they choose, when they choose and where they choose to, consequently demonstrating that the government is unable to defend and protect the public against the threat posed by terrorist (Braithwaite, 2013). This is a crucial point, because even though counterterrorism measures continue to evolve and change in order to address the current threat posed by terrorism at home and abroad, the government simply cannot protect everyone and everything all at the same time (Homeland Security, 2017; Shughart, 2006). The feeling of fear, personal threat and risk perceptions can significantly influence the choice of whether to support or not the counterterrorism measures adopted by the government (Bloch-Elkon, 2011). Anxiety is often a reflection of the overestimation of the risks and threat perceived by the public. This can either increase the support for countermeasures or force governments to react in order to reduce public anxiety by adopting over restrictive counter measures (Bloch-Elkon, 2011; Braithwaite, 2013). The fear in people following a terrorist attack is an important element for counterterrorism policies, as it enables policy makers and the government to gain support for policies and legislation aimed at protecting the public and preventing future terrorist attacks (Brinson & Stohl, 2012). Current research shows that those who have higher levels of fear are more likely to support restrictive counterterrorism measures, such as civil liberties restrictions, aggressive actions, target killings, harsher punitive penalties or military style actions (Brinson & Stohl, 2012; Brooks, 2011).

Media and Terrorism

Media Reporting on Terrorism

Terrorism has become a major part of the daily news by informing the public on terrorism related matters. Media has become the main source of information for majority of the population, claiming to be complete and unbiased in all respects (Iqbal, 2015). Technological advancements of live and instant coverage of events and 24-hour access, has transformed the media and allowed it to gain not only local and regional audience, but a global one (Iqbal, 2015; Jackson et al, 2011; Kampf, 2014). With advancements in technology and ability to access news media from variety of sources, it has become important for people to check and follow a variety of news sources to find out all the possible details about the event that has occurred. Today major sources of media news are accessed either through the internet, television and more recently social media platforms (Enache, 2012). With advancements in reporting and access, media provides the viewer a front row seat to what is going on, takes the audience to the place effected, makes the event seem more real and prompts the feeling of being a part of the event, no matter where you are in the world (Galily et al, 2016). Furthermore, current technological advancements, allow for direct and almost instant dissemination of information across various social media platforms. Some scholars even argue that the majority of the population become informed of current events primarily through social media, rather than the traditional news media (Galily et al, 2016). The 2013 Boston Marathon bombings is a good example to illustrate how social media platforms have become a source of 'breaking news' and how quickly news can spread on a global scale. Within 10 minutes of the first explosion, there were over 750,000 people who had mentioned the event, and within the first 24 hours of the attack more than 3.5 million tweets were sent (Galily et al, 2016). This incident is a perfect example of the effectiveness of social media as a medium of disseminating news related information for both during and after the event. As time passes we are more likely to see social media becoming a primary and

‘breaking news’ source of information due to its accessibility and traditional news media to become a secondary source for detailed information in relation to the events (Galily et al, 2016).

Majority of scholars point out that terrorism and the media exist in a symbiotic relationship, meaning there is a mutual coexistence where both profit from one another (Galily et al, 2016; Iqbal, 2015; Jackson et al, 2011; Rich, 2013). Terrorists need the publicity provided by the media in order to spread fear, gain exposure and spread their message. Terrorists go through significant consideration in deciding their targets and location and plan their attacks in a manner that would ensure them attention from national and foreign media (Gareeva, Bolashkov, Ivanov & Teryoshina, 2016; Iqbal, 2015; Kampf, 2014). On the other hand, by reporting on terrorist events, the media benefits through an increase in audience, viewings, ratings, sales and popularity (Jackson et al, 2011; Kampf, 2014). In short, the media is used as a platform for disseminating terrorist ideology and at the same time, terrorism provides the dramatic events that the media can report on (Galily et al, 2016; Iqbal, 2015). It is important to note that terrorist do not always benefit completely from the media exposure, because it is often that the message they are trying to send is lost in the anguish caused by the attacks (Jenkins, 2006).

Terror attack are provided extensive news coverage on television, internet, radio and newspapers where information regarding the attack is disseminated for weeks following the attack (Enache, 2012). The terrorist attack must be unexpected, dramatic and shocking for it to gain global media interests and extensive coverage (Galily et al, 2016; Nacos et al, 2008). The high news value associated fatal terrorist attacks, makes it extremely unlikely that the event will not be reported on, even if it results in the death of a single American citizen. The more violence inflicted the greater extent of media coverage (Kampf, 2014; Randahl, 2016). On the other hand, some scholars argue that, while the media is extremely useful to terrorist organizations in spreading fear and intimidation, the media can have a stabilizing effect on terrorism. The amount of attention terrorists receive through the media, in reality is finite (Pfeiffer, 2012).

This argument is based on that terrorist compete for the attention with other news, especially news about other terrorist attacks. Therefore, when there is a higher level of overall terrorism, a single incident will consequently receive less attention and have lower marginal effect. This may serve as a deterrent for terrorist groups for engaging in terrorism, and most groups may consider spreading incidents over time, so that each attack will receive the maximum amount of media attention (Pfeiffer, 2012).

Prior to 9/11 there was no significant attention paid to terrorist events by the media, however following 9/11 this significantly changed (Heath & Waymer, 2014). It was the 9/11 attacks that began the live broadcasting trend, where millions of people around the world watched as the events unfolded in front of them (Galily et al, 2016). The tragic loss of lives, extensive property damage and defining the event as an attack on the American culture and way of life, popular culture and mass media fueled the feeling of fear and patriotism among the American population. The persistent reporting of the attack and referring to those responsible for the attack as criminals and insurgents, kept fear and panic level high among the public (Altheide 2006; Altheide, 2007; Enache, 2012). Majority of the media reporting on terrorist events is focused on the victimization aspect, negative imagery regarding the middle east and terrorist organization with focus on dehumanizing those who carry out the attacks, rather than reporting on the reasoning behind the attacks (Altheide, 2007).

Recent research conducted by Gareeva and colleagues (2016) examined the basis of content among mass media, in particular the analytical messages and comments in the news that appeared on CNN during 2015 and 2016. During this period 30 large acts of terrorism occurred globally, resulting in a total of 8685 messages broadcast on CNN in relation to terrorism. When looking at the specific content, 'terrorism' was mentioned in 3839 messages, 'terror' was mentioned in 2910 messages, and 'act of terrorism' was mentioned in 1936 messages (Gareeva et al, 2016). Gareeva and colleagues further examined the content of the messages and concluded that, 30% of the messages were about the course of investigating acts of

terrorism, 20% of the messages were about the activities undertaken by secret services and security services on preventing terrorism, tracking terrorist and their punishments, and additional 20% of the messages were about the terrorists, their biographies and photos of their crimes (Gareeva et al, 2016). The last three types of messages each made up 10% of the total and covered; performance reports and discussions on fighting terrorism, information about the victims, and information on development and deployment of new information technologies for tracking and prosecuting terrorists (Gareeva et al, 2016).

Media Influence on Public Perception of Terrorism

Media has become a significant part of our daily lives. What people know about the world around them is primarily knowledge acquired from reading or watching the news. When an event such as a terrorist attack occurs, the public relies on the media sources to report on the incident and provide explanations as to why it occurred, who was involved, the damage caused and any political significance (Nacos et al, 2008). When the media reports on terrorist events, the media relies on already established stereotypes and 'frames' to define the act and shape the audience view and belief on the issue a hand (Brinson & Stohl, 2012; Enache, 2012). The news frames used by the media aid their audiences understand in broader context the historical, social, normative and political dynamics of the phenomenon. The use of metaphors by the media, can significantly influence public perception, attitude and understanding of terrorism (Spencer, 2012). Common terms and frames used by the media when reporting on terrorism are: terrorists as monsters, villains or evildoers, and the attack is framed as national trauma with emphasis on the victims. When a narrative of terrorism is frequently repeated, it becomes embedded within social and political culture that gains a widespread perception as the reality and truth (Jackson et al, 2011).

Following 9/11, the media has used four common conceptual metaphors when discussing terrorism and terrorist attacks (Spencer, 2012). The first common metaphor used by the media is portraying

terrorism as an act of war. War is already a widely used and accessible concept where everyone knows that war is not normal, it is associated with violence and special precautions needed to deal with the enemy. By referring to terrorism as war, it diminishes the debate of whether military action is necessary to handle the situation. The public associates war with violence, insecurity, where the application of military force is needed to achieve victory and solve the threat posed by terrorism (Spencer, 2012). A good example is the unforeseen 'declaration of war' against terror by the Bush administration which supported the invasion of Iraq following 9/11 (Spencer, 2012). The second common metaphor used by the media is portraying terrorism as crime. In most cases, those affected by the terrorist attacks are portrayed as victims of a serious crime. This metaphor is used often because the concept of crime is very common and relatable. This metaphor prompts more of a judicial response rather than military, and it usually involves support for legal solutions and implementations of new laws as a way to ensure safety and action against terrorist (Spencer, 2012).

The third common metaphor used by the media is portraying terrorism as uncivilized evil by using terms such as: vile, barbaric, evil, inhumane and savage. When the idea of good and evil is brought up, due to the already established social construction of terrorism as vile, barbaric and inhumane, the public automatically associates terrorists and terrorism events as evil. (Spencer, 2012). By using this metaphor, the media not only creates the image of terrorism as evil, it excludes the need for explaining why terrorist did what they did. The inherent answer and ultimate justification for the reasoning behind the terrorist attacks, is because they are evil and want to kill. Eliminating the evil becomes a priority and countermeasures such as military violence, detention without trial and torture appear appropriate and less shocking (Spencer, 2012). The last common metaphor used by the media is portraying terrorism as a disease, by using already socially constructed terms such as: sick, plague, psychopath and madman. These

terms construct the view that terrorism is sickening, that it is like a disease that cannot be cured or reasoned with, creating the need to isolate and remove the threat (Spencer, 2012).

The way the information is presented to the audience is also an important factor. A study conducted by Cho and colleagues (2003) found that the use of dramatic images in televised news coupled with prolonged exposure generates greater emotional reaction by the audience when compared to newsprint coverage. Consequently, the effect of the media on public perception is greater when the audience watches rather than reads about the events, the visual aid creates a significant difference (Cho et al, 2003). A more recent study was conducted by Brinson and Stohl (2012) who surveyed American participants in relation to the 2005 London terrorist attacks. Considering that the American participants were not the immediate victims of the terror attack, it was expected that the geographical distance should lessens the effects of fear, threat perception and emotion (Brinson & Stohl, 2012). What they found was surprising, the use of domestic or homegrown frames by the media had a powerful emotional impact and increased the fear of a future attack among the participants. Those who were more fearful of future terrorist attacks at home, also supported restrictive counterterrorism measures and aggressive policies (Brinson & Stohl, 2012). This study demonstrates the power of the media in influencing public threat perception and instilling fear even when the treat is not close to home. Considering that the participants were American citizens and were in the United States, while the terrorist attack occurred in London, it shows that geographical proximity of the attack is no longer significant (Brinson & Stohl, 2012). With global media coverage of the events and use of domestic threat frames, terrorism no longer effects only the immediate victims. The media has helped terrorist instill fear and insecurity in the public, and reach audience beyond the immediate victims.

Overall reporting of terrorist events has evolved throughout the years. At first the terrorist attacks were not given much media attention and were reported on, either in the evening news or next day papers (Kampf, 2014). Today, with the advanced technology people across the world, become informed about a

terrorist attack usually within minutes after it has happened (Kampf, 2014). The news media continue to emphasize the threat posed by terrorist and likelihood of future attacks which in effect continues to allow terrorist to reach and instill fear among the global population (Galily et al, 2016; Nacos et al, 2008). The public perception of the threat posed by terrorism and their fear of the phenomenon induces false sense of insecurity, which in effect influences their support for various counterterrorism measures (Brinson & Stohl, 2012; Brooks, 2011).

Summary of Literature

Creating a profile of the 'typical terrorist' has been as difficult as agreeing upon a universally accepted definition of terrorism. The United Nations have struggled to develop a unified definition for the last few years, and so far, it has been unsuccessful (Weissman et al, 2014). Despite the definitional issues, scholars have recognized common and generalized characteristics seen in homegrown terrorists. They tend to be younger and primarily males, however there is no common thread of race, education, ethnicity, employment or social status (Shughart, 2006). As there is no single terrorist personality, there is no single cause. The meaning of terrorism has significantly changed since its initial use in the French revolution, where today the term is used in accordance with legal systems, penal codes and political ideologies (Jackson et al, 2011). Today terrorist primarily employ the use of vehicle ramming in busy public places, firearm assaults, improvised explosive devices and homemade bombs (Webb & Cutter, 2009). The threat of terrorism no longer comes solely from international designated terrorism organization, today the threat is primarily from radicalized homegrown terrorists.

Counterterrorism measures need to be focused on greater understanding of the process of radicalization and terrorist recruitment and focus on undermining the appeal of extremism and disrupt social media platforms used for spreading propaganda (Heath & Waymer, 2014). The Department of

Homeland Security, the FBI and other government agencies work together on coordinating security measure and assessing the terrorist threat nationwide, such as: identifying foreign and United States citizens who have left the country to either join a terrorist group or receive training from them, and identifying self-radicalized homegrown terrorist (Amble, 2012; Homeland Security, 2017). Effective counterterrorism measures require a mix of approaches and not just target killings and criminal prosecutions. Instead, intelligence gathering, analysis, investigation and risk assessments need to be adopted to ensure effectiveness (Bachmann, 2012). Support for counterterrorism measures is significantly influenced by the fear and threat perception of the public (Bloch-Elkon, 2011; Braithwaite, 2013; Brinson & Stohl, 2012; Brooks, 2011)

Terrorism instils fear, panic and anxiety in the public, due to the inherent violence and perceived risks associated with the phenomenon, primarily: loss of life, serious bodily injury or destruction of property (Heath & Waymer, 2014). The way the public perceives terrorism and the threats it poses is influenced by social and cultural constructions. There is limited amount of current research on public perception of terrorism and their evaluation of the significantly increasing homegrown terrorism threat (Braithwaite, 2013; LaFree et al, 2013). One of the main sources of information and influences on public attitudes, ideas and perceptions of terrorism is the media, that most often depicts terrorist and their acts as evil, barbaric and inhumane (Enache, 2012; Rich, 2013). When there is a terrorist attack that results in casualties and mass destruction of property, global media attention and coverage is often ensured. Media is essential to terrorism as it allows for the escalation of fear, intimidation and overestimation of the threat (Enache, 2012; Pfeiffer, 2012). Without mass media, it would be extremely difficult for terrorists to instill fear beyond the immediate victims (Pfeiffer, 2012). Scholars often criticize the media for increasing the impact of terror events through their extensive coverage, dissemination of information and the way information is presented (Kampf, 2014).

Overall, majority of the American population tend to show high levels of fear and overestimate the threat of future terrorist attacks (Braithwaite, 2013; Frazzano & Snyder, 2014; LaFree et al, 2013; Nacos et al, 2008). Most recent research examining public perception of terrorism and the threat it poses was conducted in 2012-2013, more recent research is needed in this area to provide a clear and recent picture of the public perception of terrorism and the threat they believe it poses. Current research is also needed to establish whether the media continues to influence public attitudes and beliefs towards terrorism. It is important to have more current analysis because those public attitudes and fear influence the support for counterterrorism measures proposed by the government (Brinson & Stohl, 2012).

The following chapter, discusses the methodology used in this thesis. Chapter 3 looks at the research design, research variables, the sample and data.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODS

Introduction

With the increase of terrorist attacks across the world and the recent homegrown terrorist attack on American soil in October 2017, the United States population is anticipated to have heightened sense of fear and overestimation of the threat posed. American citizens continue to worry about terrorism as much as they did following 9/11. Scholars suggest due to consistent information represented using common metaphors (evil, animal, inhumane, savage, act of war) disseminated by the media over terrorism related events, it influences public perception of terrorism and terrorist, and instills persistent sense of fear and overestimation of the threat (See: Braithwaite, 2013; Brinson & Stohl, 2012; LaFree et al, 2013; Nacos et al, 2008; Spencer, 2012).

This research aimed to examine whether the media continues to influence public attitudes on terrorism related matters and whether in fact news media remains to be the primary source of information, or whether social media has taken over. In addition, the research examined whether the respondents, are aware of how to respond in the event of a terrorist attack. In order to provide more current data and analysis regarding the issues discussed, the study will focus on four research questions.

- 1) Does following news media reports on terrorism related matters, influence the way people perceive terrorism and terrorists?
- 2) Do those who follow news media reporting on terrorism, anticipate a higher likelihood of a terrorist attack occurring and are they more fearful than those who do not follow news media reporting?
- 3) Is news/mass media the primary source of information on terrorist related events, or has social media taken over?
- 4) Is majority of the sample unaware of what actions to take in the event of a terrorist attack?

Research Design

The Sample

The sample for this research was obtained through non-probability (convenience) sampling. The reasoning behind choosing non-probability sampling was because it allowed for a quicker and easier sampling, that allowed for analysis of the responses of all who participated in the research (Farrokhi & Mahmoudi-Hamidabad, 2012; Maninder, 2016). To ensure the exclusion of those who are under the age of 18, two measures were taken: the invitation email for the study clearly stated that you must be over 18 in order to participate and before the respondents took the survey they were asked to confirm their age, and if they indicated that they are not over the age of 18 the survey ended automatically. The selection of the respondents in the study was based on willingness to participate in the research and completing the survey. A total of 140 individuals responded to the invitation email of which, two respondents were under the age of 18 therefore they were automatically excluded, three respondents partially completed the survey therefore their responses were not included in the research and a total of 135 respondents completed the entire survey and were included in the current research.

The Survey

The mode of data collection chosen for this research is an online self-reported survey, that was open from February 2, 2018 to February 23, 2018. Before conducting the study, permission was sought through the participating university Internal Review Board (IRB) in November 2017 and approved in December 2017. The invitation to participate in the research was sent out by the Dean of Health and Public Services Office to the currently enrolled students in the Health and Public Services College ($N=3,574$) (Data, Analytics and Institutional Research. (2017). The invitation email provided the link to the survey on 'Qualtrics'. Prior to beginning the survey, consent notice appeared explaining the study they are

participating in, the risks and benefits, and contact details if the respondents have any questions or issues they wish to discuss.

The survey comprised of six sections, total of 36 questions (See Appendix C) that measured six types of research variables, which described the extent of media use among the respondents, how media influences the beliefs and attitudes of the respondents towards terrorism related issues and whether the respondents feel prepared to react in the event of a terrorist attack. The six research variables examined in the research are: amount of news media followed, type of news media followed, perceptions of terrorism and terrorists, threat perception, levels of fear and terrorism response awareness. Section I examined the demographics of the sample and followed the American consensus guidelines (United States Consensus Bureau, 2011) which includes the gender, age, ethnicity, race and current level of study. This information is asked of the respondents, in order to obtain demographic data of the sample.

Section II, examined two of the research variables, in particular the amount and type of news media sources followed by the respondents. The amount of news media was examined by considering weekly and daily usage of media sources. Respondents were asked to indicate their weekly usage and had the following options to choose from: (1) I do not watch /follow any, (2) once, (3) twice, (4) three time, and (5) more than four times. If the participant indicated that they do not watch or follow any news media, they were automatically taken to Section III of the survey. However, if the participant indicated any weekly usage they were asked a second question on their daily usage and had the following options to choose from: (1) once, (2) twice, (3) three times, and (4) more than four times.

Total of three questions were posed to examine the type of news/mass media followed by the respondents and whether traditional news media remains the primary source used by the respondents to find information on terrorism related matters. The first question asked the respondents to indicate which news media sources they use the most to find out information in relation to terrorism, and were asked to

choose one of the following: (1) online news-media reports, (2) televised news-media, (3) newspapers, (4) radio news, (5) social media, and (6) other. The following two questions asked the respondents to indicate from a list provided their primary news media source (i.e. Fox News, NBC News, CNN News...) and their primary social media source (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat...) that they use for terrorism related news.

Section III of the survey, examined the respondents' perceptions of terrorism and terrorists. A total of four questions were asked in this section. Perception of terrorism was examined by asking the respondents to indicate which of the following options primarily describes what terrorism is, based on their opinion: (1) act of war, (2) criminal, (3) uncivilized evil, (4) cowardly, (5) political violence, (6) simply violent, (7) justified, and (8) other. The second question examined the respondents' perception of terrorists, where they were asked to indicate which of the following options primarily describes what a terrorist is based on their opinion: (1) evil, (2) animal, (3) inhumane, (4) coward, (5) sick, (6) insurgent, (7) jihadists and (8) other. The third question in this section asked the respondents to indicate, based on their opinion which of the following options who they believe terrorism is aimed at: (1) the public/ordinary citizens, (2) the government, (3) the military, (4) the American way of life/ American culture, and (5) other. The last question in this section asked the respondents about their opinion on what is the primary motivation for terrorism, and were asked to choose one of the following: (1) intimidate and coerce a government, (2) cause fear in the public, (3) cause mass casualty/fatality/death, (4) cause mass destruction, (5) spreading political message / agenda, (6) religion, and (7) other. The list of answers available for all four questions were created based on the related literature, in particular the most common metaphors used by the media and the United States Code definition of terrorism.

Section IV of the survey, consisted of seven questions that examined the respondents perceived terrorism threat. The first question asked the respondents opinion on the likelihood of another terrorist

attack occurring in America. Respondents were asked to choose one response that applies to them from a 'Likert scale'. The second question asked the respondents based on their opinion, when they think there will be another domestic/homegrown terrorist attack in America and were asked to choose one of the following options: (1) within the next 2 weeks, (2) within the next month, (3) within the next 6 months, (4) within the next year, and (5) not sure. The third question asked the respondents to state, based on their opinion who they believe poses more threat to the US: (1) the homegrown/domestic terrorism, (2) international terrorist organizations, (3) both pose equal threat, and (4) not sure. The fourth question asked the respondents' if they are aware of the National Terrorism Advisory System maintained by the Department of Homeland Security, and were asked to indicate either (1) yes, (2) no, or (3) not sure. Question five asked the respondents if they are aware of the current domestic threat level to the United States, and again were asked to reply with either (1) yes, (2) no, or (3) not sure. The sixth questions asked the respondents, based on their opinion what they think is the current threat level posed by homegrown/domestic terrorism to the United States. The options to choose from are taken from the Department of Homeland Security 'Terrorism Threat Advisory Scale' and included the following: (1) low, (2) guarded, (3) elevated, (4) high, (5) severe, and (6) not sure. The last question in this section asked the respondents, based on their opinion, how significant is the threat of homegrown/domestic terrorism to the United States. There were six options to choose one from: (1) not significant, (2) somewhat significant, (3) significant, (4) very significant, (5) highly significant, and (6) not sure.

Six questions were asked in Section V to examine the amount of terrorism related fear experienced by the respondents. The first question asked the respondents how often they think about terrorism, where the second question asked the respondents about how often they think about being a victim of terrorism. For both question the respondents were asked to choose one of the following responses: (1) I do not think about it, (2) daily, (3) weekly, (4) monthly, (5) only when a terrorist attack occurs, and (6) only after

watching/reading/ hearing news about terrorism. The third question in this section asked the respondents about what levels of fear they experienced when they watch/read/listen to stories about terrorism, and were asked to choose one of the following: (1) I do not experience any fear, (2) experience slight fear, (3) experience certain fear, (4) experience extreme fear, and (5) not sure. The fourth and fifth questions focused on examining how fear of terrorism effects daily activities, in particular the questions asked the respondents' whether they felt unsafe in public and crowded places because of the likelihood of a terrorist attack and whether they purposefully avoid public and crowded areas because of the likelihood of a terrorist attack. For both question the respondents were asked to indicate either: (1) yes, (2) no, (3) maybe, or (4) or not sure. The last question of this section asked the respondents whether they feel safe on campus and in classrooms and were asked to respond with either: (1) yes, (2) no, (3) maybe, or (4) not sure. The questions in this section were designed in the manner that would provide sufficient data for analysis and answer the research questions most accurately.

Lastly in Section VI, the respondents' reaction awareness to terrorism attacks was examined, in particular in situations where a terrorist engages in a firearms assault. Total of six questions were asked. The first question asked the respondents, in their opinion how likely it is for a terrorist attack to occur on campus and were asked to indicate from a 'Likert' scale. The second question asked the respondents, whether in their opinion, they think they are well prepared in the event of a terrorist attack on campus. They had the following options to choose from: (1) yes, I am well prepared, (2) I am somewhat prepared, (3) I am not prepared at all, and (4) not sure. The third question asked the respondents if they are aware of the guideline steps/actions that they can take in the event of a terrorist attack, in particular when there is 'open fire'. Respondents were asked to indicate one of the following: (1) Yes, I am aware, (2) I am slightly aware, (3) No, I am not aware, and (4) not sure. The fourth question looked at different possible responses in the event of a terrorist attack, and asked the respondents based on their opinion which one

they believe is the best course of action: (1) hide, (2) run, (3) fight, (4) talk to the terrorist, (5) use your phone to call for help, (6) use your phone to post on social media, (7) ignore the even if not in close proximity, and (8) other. The fifth question asked the respondents whether they are aware that the university website provides guiding information on how to respond in the event of a terrorist engaging in an open fire on campus. The respondents were asked to indicate either: (1) yes, I am aware, (2) I have heard something about it, (3) no I was not aware, and (4) I am not sure. The last question of the survey, asked the respondents how important they think it is to be well informed and prepared in the event of a terrorist attack, and were asked to choose one from the following: (1) extremely important, (2) very important, (3) moderately important, (4) slightly important, and (5) not at all important.

Following completion of the study, the survey was made inactive and the collected responses are being stored on a personal password protected computer for analysis. Only the investigator has access to the collected sample data.

Data Analysis

Upon completion of data collection, descriptive statistics using ‘Qualtrics’ to analyze the raw data. Descriptive statistics are most often used to describe and illustrate a phenomenon and its characteristics, by interpreting and summarizing the features of the raw data gathered from the study (Marshall & Jonker, 2010; Nassaji, 2015; Shi & McLarty, 2009). The survey adopted quantitative and qualitative variables. The survey for this research was compromised of close-ended and structured questions, where frequencies, percentages and averages were used to analyze and describe the relationships within and between the research variables (Nassaji, 2015; Shi & McLarty, 2009; Zohrabi, 2013).

Considering that the survey adopted nominal and ordinal level of measurements, the manner in which the data was presented depended on the level of measurement (Fisher & Marshall, 2009). Generally, the analysis of the data focused on measuring the median, which is the middle value of the measurement

that determined the average score of the measure, which was not affected by extreme values the way mean measures are (Shi & McLarty, 2009). The mode was also measured, which provided analysis for the value of the greatest frequency (Shi & McLarty, 2009). Frequency distribution analysis was used to indicate the least and most popular responses by the respondents.

The nominal measures are presented in various coded categories that are not ranked. The descriptive analysis of the data examined the central tendency of the raw data by measuring dispersion, which was the frequency distribution also referred to as the mode (Fisher & Marshall, 2009; Marshall & Jonker, 2010). This provided the number of responses for each category, which was used to determine the highest and lowest responses for each question, such as the most and least used news media source by the respondents, or which is the most and least popular perception of terrorists.

The ordinal measures are presented in various coded and ranked scales, therefore the descriptive analysis of the data examined the relative ranking among the categories in each question (Fisher & Marshall, 2009). The central tendency for ordinal data was determined by measuring the median which was the middle score from the ordered distribution, and the mode which was the category with greatest response frequency. Measure of dispersion was analyzed by examining the frequency distribution that provided the highest and lowest number of cases for each category, for example whether most respondents somewhat fear or extremely fear terrorism. Dispersion was also measured in percentile which provided the percentage of respondents who responded for each category for each question, for example the percent of the sample who feel unsafe in public and crowded places or the percent of sample who believe it is extremely likely for another terrorist attack to happen in the United States. The characteristics of the collected data through both nominal and ordinal measures, were organized, presented and summarized in tables, percentages and 'crosstabs'.

The reliability and validity of the data collected is important when conducting research (Zohrabi, 2013). The reliability of the data collected was ensured by using structured and close-ended questions in the survey, which allowed for a consistent measure across the sample. In addition, it is important to ensure that the research measure (the survey) adequately measured what it is actually intended to measure (Zohrabi, 2013). The questions in the survey were designed based on current literature (i.e. Braithwaite, 2013; LaFree et al, 2013; Nacos et al, 2008) review in the field of study and question that are commonly asked to the population in prior research in the study of terrorism perception that have shown to produce valid data. In addition, the questions in the survey were easily understood, short and direct, and measure each research variables as extensively and as accurately as possible. When going through the questions it is clear what they are measuring, therefore ensuring face validity of the survey and the raw data collected. Validity and reliability was further increased through the adoption of the American consensus guidelines in the demographics section of the survey and through the adoption of already established scales throughout, in particular: the Likert scale, significance scale and the terrorism threat scale. Due to the fact that the study adopted a convenience sample, the analysis of the data obtained from the survey cannot be generalized to the population, instead the results are generalized to the sample.

Benefits of the Research

According to most recent research (Bloch-Elkon, 2011; Braithwaite, 2013; Jenkins, 2017; LaFree et al, 2013, Nacos et al, 2008), majority of the American population tend to show high levels of fear and overestimate the threat posed by terrorism. In addition, the current research shows that news media continues to be a primary source of information, where with prolonged and constant reporting on terrorism, it influences public view of terrorism related matters and at the same time instils fear in the public (Chermak, 2003; Egnoto et al, 2016; Iqbal, 2015). Considering that most recent research in this

area of study was conducted around 2012 and 2013, this study aimed to provide a more current and update analysis on how the younger population perceives terrorism and where they get most of the information from.

In addition, the research also provided the opportunity for the analysis on how well the respondents at the participating university are prepared to react in the event of a terrorist attack. The study also examined if the respondents felt safe on campus, if they are aware that the participating university provides information on various appropriate responses and if they know where to access it. This in addition provides some feedback and guidance to the university on whether they need to increase awareness among the student population, in order to better prepare the students in the event of a terrorist attack on campus.

Due to the use of convenience sampling, the research findings are not generalizable to the general population, instead the findings will provide data representative of the sample. Despite the generalizability issues, the current study aimed to provide more recent data on current perceptions of terrorism, the threat it poses, levels of fear associated with it and whether the media has aided in shaping those particular beliefs.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine current attitudes and perception of terror, the perceived threat it poses, the levels of fear experienced and whether the news media may have influenced these attitudes and beliefs. In addition, the study looked at the awareness and preparedness of the respondents in relation to terrorism. To achieve this, four research questions were posed and as a result, six research variables were examined. The sample in this study consisted of 135 students attending a mid-size university in a southern state who were enrolled with the Health and Public Services College ($N=3,574$). Convenient sampling was used for inclusion in the study, consequently everyone who participates in the

study was included in the research, excluding the two respondents who were under 18 years of age and the three respondents who partially completed the survey. Participation in the study was voluntary, and it required the respondents to complete a survey that comprised of 36 close-ended questions. The questions in the survey were created based on the literature. Since convenience sampling was used, the data gathered by the research cannot be generalized to the general population, however it will be representative of the sample. The raw data gathered from the survey was analyzed through descriptive statistics using 'Qualtrics'. Furthermore, the research adds to current literature, a more recent analysis and data on perception of terrorism related matters and whether news media still has any influences over them.

Following completion of data gathering a brief analysis of the main findings of the survey are discussed in Chapter 4. The analysis of the results will follow the same structure as the survey, therefore results will be discussed in accordance with the six sections in the survey. Chapter 5 provides a detailed discussion of the results and reflect back on the research questions posed.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

This chapter discusses the results and data collected from the survey completed by the 135 students enrolled with one college at a mid-size university. The survey examined six research variables: amount of news media followed, type of news media followed, perceptions of terrorism and terrorists, threat perception, levels of fear and terrorism response awareness. The chapter is divided into six sections that correspond to the sections and flow of the survey.

Demographics

Five demographic variables were measured in the survey: age group, gender, ethnicity, race and current level of study. Table 1 provides a presentation of the demographic profile of the sample. A total of 135 respondents completed the survey.

Table 1

Sample Demographics (N = 135)

Variable		<i>n</i>	%
Current Age	18-24	81	60
	25-35	29	21.5
	36-45	17	12.5
	46-55	6	4.5
	56+	2	1.5
Age Group	18-44	127	94
	45-64	8	6
	65+	0	0
Gender	Male	42	31.1
	Female	93	68.9

(table continues)

	Variable	<i>n</i>	%
Ethnicity	Latino or Hispanic	37	27.4
	Not Latino or Hispanic	98	72.6
Race	White	89	65.9
	Black or African American	24	17.8
	American Indian or Alaska Native	4	3
	Asian	4	3
	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	1	0.7
	Other	13	9.6
Level of Study	Freshman	3	2.2
	Sophomore	23	17
	Junior	49	36.3
	Senior	40	29.6
	Graduate Student	20	14.8

Those aged 18 to 24 made up 60% of the sample. The most reported gender in the sample was female, accounting for 68.9% of the sample. The most common ethnicity reported was non-Hispanic or Latino at 72.6%, and most common race reported in the sample was white representing 65.9% of the sample. The least reported ethnicity was Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, making up 0.7% of the sample. Students at the Junior level of study participated the most in the study, representing 36.3% of the sample. Those in their Freshman year (2.2%) were the least participating.

Amount and Type of News Media Followed

Five variables were examined, for the amount and type of news media followed (Table 2). The amount of media the respondents watched or followed in relation to terrorism, the most popular responses were once a week (28.4%) and once a day (60.8%). Interestingly the number of respondents who reported that they do not watch or follow any news media (27.6%) was nearly as equal as those who reported that they watched or followed news media once a week.

The most popular response for the type of news media source used by the respondents was online news media sources (42.9%), followed by televised news media (27.5%), and the least reported source was newspapers (1%). Respondents reported that they would go to CNN News (33.7%) first to find out information about terrorism related matters, followed by Fox News (28.6%). 7.1% of the respondents indicated that they only used social media to access terrorism related information. Facebook (45.4%) was reported as the most used social media platform for terrorism related information.

Table 2

Amount and Type of News Media Watched/Followed

Variable		<i>n</i>	%
Amount of News Media Followed - Weekly (<i>n</i> = 134)	I do not watch/ follow any	37	27.6
	Once	38	28.4
	Twice	26	19.4
	Three times	7	5.2
	More than four times	26	19.4
Amount of News Media Followed – Daily (<i>n</i> = 97)	Once	59	60.8
	Twice	18	18.6
	Three times	8	8.2
	More than four times	12	12.4
Type of news media source used to access information on terrorism related matters. (<i>n</i> = 98)	Online news-media reports	42	42.9
	Televised news media	27	27.5
	Newspapers	1	1
	Radio news	3	3.1
	Social media	24	24.5
	Other	1	1
News Media Source Used (<i>n</i> = 98)	Fox News	28	28.6
	NBC News	8	8.2
	CNN News	33	33.7
	ABC News	2	2

(table continues)

Variable		<i>n</i>	%
<i>(cont.)</i>	CBC News	1	1
	MSNBC News	5	5.1
	Other	14	14.3
	None of the above. I use social media	7	7.1
Social Media Source Used (<i>n</i> = 97)	Facebook	44	45.4
	Twitter	26	26.8
	Snapchat	5	5.1
	Instagram	3	3.1
	Other	19	19.6

Perceptions of Terrorism and Terrorists

Four variables were examined in this section (Table 3). According to the sample data, majority of the respondents would describe terrorism as political violence (31.3%), followed by uncivilized evil (24.6%). Zero percent of the respondents described terrorism as justified. The most popular description for terrorists was evil (35.8%), followed by inhumane (26.8%). Only one respondent described terrorists as animal. The government (37.3%) was the most popular response given as a to who terrorism is aimed at, whereas the least popular was the military (1.5%). The most popular primary motivations for terrorism reported were to cause fear in the public (30.6%) and spreading a political message/agenda (30.6%). The least popular answer was other (3%).

Table 3

Perceptions of Terrorism and Terrorists (N = 134)

Variable		<i>n</i>	%
Primary description of terrorism	Act of war	28	21
	Criminal	10	7.5
	Uncivilized evil	33	24.6
	Cowardly	7	5.2

	Variable	<i>n</i>	%
<i>(cont.)</i>	Political violence	42	31.3
	Simply violent	7	5.2
	Justified	0	0
	Other	7	5.2
Primary description of terrorists	Evil	48	35.8
	Animal	1	0.7
	Inhumane	36	26.8
	Coward	12	9
	Sick	10	7.5
	Insurgent	12	9
	Jihadist	2	1.5
	Other	13	9.7
Who is terrorism aimed at	The public /ordinary citizens	36	26.9
	The government	50	37.3
	The military	2	1.5
	The American way of life and American culture	41	30.6
	Other	5	3.7
Primary motivation for terrorism	Intimidate and coerce a government	18	13.4
	Cause fear in the public	41	30.6
	Cause mass casualty/fatality/death	14	10.4
	Cause mass destruction	6	4.5
	Spreading a political message /agenda	41	30.6
	Religion	10	7.5
	Other	4	3

Table 4

Frequency of Media Usage and Perceptions of Terrorism and Terrorist

		Perceptions of Terrorism								
		Act of War	Criminal	Uncivilized Evil	Cowardly	Political Violence	Simply violent	Justified	Other	Total
Weekly Use	No Usage	9	3	8	2	9	2	0	4	37
	Once	4	0	10	2	18	3	0	1	38
	Twice	3	3	8	3	7	1	0	0	25
	Three times	4	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	7
	More than four times	8	3	6	0	6	1	0	2	26
	Total	28	9	33	7	42	7	0	7	133
Daily Use	Once	8	4	15	4	23	4	0	1	59
	Twice	4	2	5	1	4	1	0	0	17
	Three times	3	1	3	0	1	0	0	0	8
	More than four times	4	0	2	0	4	0	0	2	12
	Total	19	7	25	5	32	5	0	3	96
		Perceptions of Terrorists								
		Evil	Animal	Inhumane	Coward	Sick	Insurgent	Jihadist	Other	Total
Weekly Use	No Usage	12	0	10	3	7	1	0	4	37
	Once	15	1	8	4	2	4	0	4	38
	Twice	8	0	7	3	1	4	1	1	25
	Three times	5	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	7
	More than four times	8	0	10	2	0	3	1	2	26
	Total	48	1	36	12	10	12	2	12	133

(table continues)

		Perceptions of Terrorists (<i>cont.</i>)								
		Evil	Animal	Inhumane	Coward	Sick	Insurgent	Jihadist	Other	Total
Daily Use	Once	22	1	14	7	2	6	1	6	59
	Twice	8	0	4	1	1	2	0	1	17
	Three times	4	0	2	1	0	0	0	1	8
	More than four times	2	0	5	0	0	3	1	1	12
	Total	36	1	25	9	3	11	2	9	96

The relationship between the amount of news media followed/watched and perceptions of terrorism and terrorists is further examined (Tables 4). Among the 37 respondents who reported no weekly usage, the most popular descriptions of terrorism were act of war (9) and political violence (9), whereas the most popular descriptions of terrorists were evil (12) and inhumane (10). Majority of the sample, 63 of the respondents reported to have watched or followed terrorism related news media once or twice weekly. Among those, the most popular descriptions of terrorism were political violence (25) and uncivilized evil (18), whereas the most popular descriptions of terrorists were evil (12) and inhumane (10). The remainder of the sample, 33 of the respondents reported weekly usage of three time or more, who described terrorism primarily as act of war (12) and described terrorists primarily as evil (13). For daily usage (Table 4), majority of the sample (76 respondents) reported to have accessed terrorism related news media once or twice daily. Among those, the most popular descriptions of terrorism were political violence (27) and uncivilized evil (20), whereas the most popular descriptions of terrorists were evil (30) and inhumane (18). The remainder of the sample, 20 of the respondents reported daily usage of three times or more, who described terrorism primarily as act of war (7) and described terrorists primarily as inhumane (7).

The relationship between the amount of terrorism news media followed/watched and perceived targets of terrorism is examined in Table 5. Those who reported no media usage (37), weekly usage of once or twice (63) and daily usage of once or twice (76) indicated that the most popular perceived target of terrorism to be the government (15 no-usage, 22 once/twice weekly and 28 once/twice daily). The remainder of the sample who reported weekly usage of more than three times weekly (33) and more than three times daily (20), reported the American way of life/culture (16 weekly and 10 daily) as the primary perceived target of terrorism.

Table 5

Frequency of Media Usage and Perceived Targets of Terrorism

		Public	Gov't	Military	American way of life/culture	Other	Total
Weekly Use	No Usage	10	15	1	8	3	37
	Once	13	12	0	12	1	38
	Twice	8	10	1	5	1	25
	Three times	1	2	0	4	0	7
	More than four times	4	10	0	12	0	26
	Total	36	49	2	41	5	133
Daily Use	Once	19	20	0	18	2	59
	Twice	3	8	1	5	0	17
	Three times	1	3	0	4	0	8
	More than four times	2	4	0	6	0	12
	Total	25	35	1	33	2	96

Table 6

Frequency of Media Usage and Perceived Primary Motivations of Terrorism

		Intimidate/ coerce government	Fear in the public	Mass casualty	Mass destruction	Political Message	Religion	Other	Total
Weekly Use	No Usage	4	16	4	0	8	3	2	37
	Once	5	11	4	2	12	4	0	38
	Twice	4	8	2	2	8	1	0	25
	Three times	1	3	2	0	1	0	0	7
	More than four times	4	3	2	2	11	2	2	26
	Total	18	41	14	6	40	10	4	133
Daily Use	Once	9	18	6	3	19	3	1	59
	Twice	2	3	2	1	6	3	0	17
	Three times	1	2	1	1	2	1	0	8
	More than four times	2	2	1	1	5	0	1	12
	Total	14	25	10	6	32	7	2	96

The relationship between the amount of terrorism news media usage and perceived primary motivations of terrorism is examined in Table 6. Respondents who indicated no media usage (37), reported that the primary motivation of terrorism is to cause fear in the public (16). Remainder of the sample, who indicated some amount of weekly and daily usage, the most popular motivation of terrorism is to spread a political message or agenda, followed by causing fear in the public.

Perceived Threat

A total of seven variables were examined in this section to measure the respondents perceived threat posed by terrorism (Table 7). Majority of the respondents, indicated that another terrorist attack in America is either likely (26.9%), very likely (24.6%) or extremely likely (28.4%) to happen. 41.8% of the respondents indicated that they are not sure when another domestic terrorist attack will happen in America, on the other hand 20.9% of the respondents reported that they believe another domestic terrorist attack will happen within a year. The most popular response given in relation to who poses the most threat to the US, was that both homegrown terrorists and international terrorist organizations both pose an equal threat (46.3%), followed by homegrown terrorists alone (42.5%).

Respondents' awareness of the National Terrorism Advisory System, was split between 47% who knew about the system and 44.1% who did not. Only 31.3% of the sample reported to have knowledge of the current domestic terrorism threat in the US, on the other hand 50.8% of the respondents do not have knowledge of the threat level. According to the personal opinion of the respondents, the majority indicated the current threat level posed by domestic terrorism to the US to be either elevated (30.8%) or guarded (26.3%). Lastly, the respondents indicated that the significance of the threat posed by homegrown terrorism is either significant (30.6%) or very

significant (28.4%). Only one respondent indicated that the homegrown terrorism threat is not significant.

Table 7

Reported Terrorism Threat Perceptions (N = 134)

	Variable	<i>n</i>	%
Likelihood of another terrorist attack in America	Unlikely	3	2.3
	Somewhat likely	23	17.1
	Likely	36	26.9
	Very likely	33	24.6
	Extremely likely	38	28.4
	Not sure	1	0.7
Estimated time when another domestic terrorist attack will occur in the U.S.	Within 2 weeks	17	12.7
	Within a month	9	6.7
	Within 6 months	24	17.9
	Within a year	28	20.9
	Not sure	56	41.8
Who poses more threat to U.S.	Homegrown/domestic terrorists	57	42.5
	International terrorist organizations	9	6.7
	Both pose equal threat	62	46.3
	Not sure	6	4.5
National Terrorism Advisory System Awareness	Yes	63	47
	No	59	44.1
	Not sure	12	8.9
Knowledge of the current domestic threat level	Yes	42	31.3
	No	68	50.8
	Not sure	24	17.9

(table continues)

	Variable	<i>n</i>	%
Perceived current threat level posed by homegrown terrorists to the US	Low	6	4.5
	Guarded	35	26.3
	Elevated	41	30.8
	High	32	24.1
	Severe	10	7.5
	Not sure	9	6.8
Significance of threat posed by homegrown terrorists to the US	Not significant	1	0.8
	Somewhat significant	18	13.4
	Significant	41	30.6
	Very significant	38	28.4
	Highly significant	29	21.6
	Not sure	7	5.2

The relationship between the amount of terrorism related news media followed/watched and perceived likelihood and time frame of a terrorist attack are examined in Table 8. The majority of respondents (37) who reported no media usage, indicated that another terrorist attack in the US is extremely likely (12) and that they are not sure (15) when that would happen. The respondents that reported media usage once or twice weekly (63) and once or twice daily (76), indicated that another attack occurring in America is likely (23 weekly and 25 daily). The respondents that reported weekly usage of three times or more (33) and daily usage three times or more (20), reported that another attack in the US is extremely likely (14 weekly and 10 daily). When the respondents were asked to indicate an estimated time for when they believe another terrorism attack is likely to happen, no matter the amount of terrorism related news media watched/ followed on weekly or daily basis, majority of the respondents indicated that they were not sure.

Table 8

Frequency of Media Usage, Likelihood of a Terrorist Attack and Estimated Time Frame

Likelihood of another attack occurring in America								
		Unlikely	Somewhat likely	Likely	Very Likely	Extremely likely	Not sure	Total
Weekly Use	No Usage	2	6	9	8	12	0	37
	Once	1	7	12	10	7	1	38
	Twice	0	4	11	5	5	0	25
	Three times	0	0	2	1	3	0	7
	More than four times	0	5	1	9	11	0	26
	Total	3	23	35	33	38	1	133
Daily Use	Once	0	9	20	15	14	1	59
	Twice	1	5	5	4	2	0	17
	Three times	0	2	1	1	4	0	8
	More than four times	0	1	1	4	6	0	12
	Total	1	17	27	24	26	1	96
Estimated time when another domestic terrorist attack is likely to occur								
		2 weeks	1 month	6 months	1 year	Not sure	Total	
Weekly Use	No Usage	4	3	5	10	15	37	
	Once	5	3	8	6	16	38	
	Twice	5	1	5	1	13	25	
	Three times	0	1	2	3	1	7	
	More than four times	3	1	3	8	11	26	
	Total	17	9	23	28	56	133	

(table continues)

Estimated time when another domestic terrorist attack is likely to occur (cont.)							
		2 weeks	1 month	6 months	1 year	Not sure	Total
Daily Use	Once	7	4	15	8	25	59
	Twice	2	0	2	3	10	17
	Three times	2	1	2	2	1	8
	More than four times	2	1	0	5	4	12
	Total	13	6	19	18	40	96

Table 9

Frequency of Media Usage, Perceived Threat Level and Threat Significance

Perceived Domestic Threat Level								
		Low	Guarded	Elevated	High	Severe	Not sure	Total
Weekly Use	No Usage	2	9	10	10	3	3	37
	Once	1	12	10	8	3	3	38
	Twice	2	8	8	6	1	0	25
	Three times	0	1	4	1	0	1	7
	More than four times	1	5	9	6	3	2	26
	Total	6	35	41	31	10	9	133
Daily Use	Once	2	16	18	13	3	6	58
	Twice	1	5	8	3	0	0	17
	Three times	0	3	1	3	1	0	8
	More than four times	1	2	3	3	3	0	12
	Total	6	35	41	31	10	6	95

(table continues)

Significance of Domestic Terrorist Threat to the U.S.								
		Not significant	Somewhat significant	Significant	Very Significant	Highly significant	Not sure	Total
Weekly Use	No Usage	0	5	12	8	9	3	37
	Once	1	6	14	7	7	3	38
	Twice	0	3	7	11	3	1	25
	Three times	0	0	3	2	2	0	7
	More than four times	0	4	5	9	8	0	26
	Total	1	18	41	37	29	7	133
Daily Use	Once	1	6	22	17	10	3	59
	Twice	0	6	3	6	1	1	17
	Three times	0	0	2	2	4	0	8
	More than four times	0	1	2	4	5	0	12
	Total	1	13	29	29	20	4	96

The relationship between the amount of terrorism related news media followed/watched and perceived threat level and threat significance is examined in Table 9. Respondents who reported no media usage (37), indicated that the current domestic terror threat level is either guarded (9), elevated (10) or high (10), and that the terror domestic threat to the US is significant (12). Respondents who reported weekly usage of once or twice (63), the majority indicated that the current threat level is guarded (20), followed by elevated (18) and that the threat level is either significant (21) or very significant (18). The remainder of the respondents who reported weekly usage of three times or more (33 respondents), majority reported that the current threat level is elevated (13), and that the domestic terror threat is either very significant (11) or highly significant (10).

The respondents who reported daily usage of once or twice (75), majority reported that the current domestic threat level to the US is either elevated (26) followed by guarded (21), and that the domestic terror threat level to the US is either significant (25) or very significant (23). Respondents who reported daily use of three times or more (20), majority indicated that the domestic terror threat level to the US is either high (6) or guarded (5), and that the domestic terror threat to the US is either highly significant (9) or very significant (6).

Fear Levels

In order to examine the fear levels associated with terrorism among the respondents, six variables were examined (Table 10). 27.8 % of the respondents indicated that they think about terrorism and 22.6% of the respondents indicated that they think about being a victim of terrorism only after watching/reading/hearing news about terrorism. 11.3% of the respondents indicated that they do not think about terrorism and 34.6% of the respondents indicated that they do not think

about being a victim of terrorism. When the respondents were asked about the level of fears experienced after they either watch/read/listen to stories about terrorism, 34.6% of the respondents indicated they experience slight fear, 28.6% indicated that they do not experience any fear and only 7.5% indicated experience of extreme fear. Most of the respondents indicated they feel safe (45.9%) in public and crowded places, where 21% of the respondents indicated that they feel unsafe in public and crowded places due to the likelihood of a terrorist attack. 72.9% of the respondents indicated that they do not avoid public and crowded places because of the likelihood of a terrorist attack. 58.7% of the respondents indicated that they feel safe on campus and inside the classrooms, whereas 12% said they do not feel safe and 17.3% indicated maybe.

Table 10

Fear Levels Associated with Terrorism (N = 133)

	Variable	<i>n</i>	%
Frequency of thoughts about terrorism	I do not think about it	15	11.3
	Daily	17	12.8
	Weekly	25	18.8
	Monthly	16	12
	Only when a terrorist attack occurs	23	17.3
	Only after watching/reading/hearing news about terrorism	37	27.8
Frequency of thoughts about being a victim of terrorism	I do not think about it	46	34.6
	Daily	13	9.8
	Weekly	8	6
	Monthly	12	9
	Only when a terrorist attack occurs	24	18
	Only after watching/reading/hearing news about terrorism	30	22.6

(table continues)

	Variable	<i>n</i>	%
Level of fear experience following watching/reading/listening to stories about terrorism	I do not experience any fear	38	28.6
	Experience slight fear	46	34.6
	Experience certain fear	33	24.8
	Experience extreme fear	10	7.5
	Not sure	6	4.5
Feeling unsafe in public and crowded places because of the likelihood of terrorist attack	Yes	28	21
	No	61	45.9
	Maybe	39	29.3
	Not sure	5	3.8
Purposefully avoiding public and crowded places because of the likelihood of terrorist attack	Yes	21	15.58
	No	97	72.9
	Maybe	12	9
	Not sure	3	2.3
Feeling safe on campus	Yes	78	58.7
	No	16	12
	Maybe	23	17.3
	Not sure	16	12

The relationship between the amount of media usage and the frequency of thoughts about terrorism and being a victim of terrorism is examined in Table 11. Respondents who indicated no terrorism related media usage (37), indicated that they only think about terrorism after a terrorist attack occurs (11) or only after watching/hearing/reading news about terrorism (10), and that the majority either only think about being a victim of terrorism after a terrorist attack (10) or they do not think about it at all (13). Respondents who reported weekly usage of once or twice (63) and daily usage of once or twice (76 respondents), majority indicated that they think about terrorism either only after watching/hearing/reading news about terrorism (16 weekly and 20 daily), or they

think about it on weekly basis (16 weekly and 20 daily). In addition, majority indicated that they do not think about being a victim of terrorism (23 weekly and 28 daily).

The remainder of the respondents who reported weekly usage of three times or more (32 respondents), majority of them indicated that they think about terrorism either only after watching/reading/hearing news about terrorism (10), or on daily (8) and weekly (8) basis, and that they either do not think about being a victim of terrorism (9) or that they only think about it after watching/reading/hearing news about terrorism (11). The respondents who reported daily usage of three times or more (20 respondents), majority indicated that they either think about terrorism only after watching/reading/hearing news about terrorism (6), or on daily (7) basis, and that they either do not think about being a victim of terrorism (5), or they either think about it daily basis (4) or only after watching/reading/hearing news about terrorism (4).

The relationship between the amount of media usage and perceptions of safety is examined in Table 12. No matter what the amount of access to terrorism related news media, whether it is weekly and daily access, or no terrorism related news media usage at all, the majority of the sample indicated that they do not feel unsafe in public and crowded places (61 respondents of 132 weekly and 42 respondents of 95 daily) and that they would not purposefully avoid those places because of the likelihood of a terrorist attack (92 respondents of 132 weekly and 65 respondents of 95 daily).

Table 11

Frequency of Media Usage and Frequency of Thoughts about Terrorism

		Do not think about it	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Only after terrorist attack occurs	Only after news about terrorism	Total
Frequency of Thoughts about Terrorism								
Weekly Use	No Usage	6	3	1	6	11	10	37
	Once	7	1	6	7	6	11	38
	Twice	0	5	10	1	4	5	25
	Three times	1	3	1	0	0	2	7
	More than four times	1	5	7	2	2	8	25
	Total	15	17	25	16	23	36	132
Daily Use	Once	7	3	16	7	11	15	59
	Twice	1	4	4	2	1	5	17
	Three times	0	3	2	0	0	3	8
	More than four times	1	4	2	1	0	3	11
	Total	9	14	24	10	12	26	95
Frequency of Thoughts about Being a Victim of Terrorist								
Weekly Use	No Usage	13	5	1	3	10	5	37
	Once	14	1	3	6	6	9	38
	Twice	9	3	2	3	3	5	25
	Three times	3	1	0	0	0	3	7
	More than four times	6	3	2	0	6	8	25
	Total	45	13	8	12	24	30	132

(table continues)

		Do not think about it	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Only after terrorist attack occurs	Only after news about terrorism	Total
Frequency of Thoughts about Being a Victim of Terrorist (cont.)								
Daily Use	Once	23	1	4	8	8	15	59
	Twice	5	2	2	0	2	6	17
	Three times	3	2	0	1	1	1	8
	More than four times	2	3	1	0	2	3	11
	Total	33	8	7	9	12	25	95

Table 12

Frequency of Media Usage and Perceptions of Safety

		Yes	No	Maybe	Not sure	Total
Feeling Unsafe in Crowded and Public Places						
Weekly Use	No Usage	4	18	13	2	37
	Once	8	15	12	3	38
	Twice	7	9	9	0	25
	Three times	0	6	1	0	7
	More than four times	9	13	3	0	25
	Total	28	61	38	5	132
Daily Use	Once	14	25	17	3	59
	Twice	4	7	6	0	17
	Three times	2	4	2	0	8
	More than four times	4	6	1	0	11
	Total	24	42	26	3	95
Purposefully Avoiding Crowded and Public Places						
Weekly Use	No Usage	5	31	1	0	37
	Once	6	24	6	2	38
	Twice	4	17	3	1	25
	Three times	0	7	0	0	7
	More than four times	6	17	2	0	25
	Total	21	96	12	3	132
Daily Use	Once	9	40	8	2	59
	Twice	1	14	2	0	17
	Three times	2	5	0	1	8
	More than four times	4	6	1	0	11
	Total	16	65	11	3	95

Terrorism Response Awareness

Terrorism responses awareness was measured by examining seven variables (Table 13).

Most of the respondents, 31.8 % indicated that they believe the likelihood of a terrorist attack on campus is slightly likely. Only a minority, 6% indicated that the likelihood is extremely likely.

42.4% responded that they are not prepared at all in the event of a terrorist attack on campus, whereas 22% responded that they are well prepared. 28.8% responded that they are aware and 25.8% responded that they are slightly aware of the guideline steps/actions to take in the event of a terrorists engaging in open fire. 42.4% of the respondents indicated that they are not aware of the guidelines. The most popular response for the course of action in the event of a terrorist opening fire on campus was hiding (46.2%), followed by running (26.5%). Not one respondent indicated that they would talk to the terrorist or use their phone to post on social media.

Majority of the respondents, 68.2% responded that they are not aware that the university provides guiding information on their website on how to respond in the event of a terrorist engaging in open fire on campus. 18.9% responded that they were aware and 12.1% reported to have heard something about the information availability. Majority of the respondents indicated that they think it is either extremely important (59.5%) or very important (30.5%) to be well informed and prepared in the event of a terrorist attack. On the other hand, 3.8% responded that it is slightly important 2.4% indicated it is not important at all.

Table 13

Terrorism Response Awareness (N = 132)

	Variable	<i>n</i>	%
Likelihood of a terrorist attack on campus	Extremely likely	8	6
	Moderately likely	20	15.2
	Slightly likely	42	31.8
	Neither likely nor unlikely	17	12.9
	Slightly unlikely	10	7.6
	Moderately unlikely	19	14.4
	Extremely unlikely	16	12.1

(table continues)

	Variable	<i>n</i>	%
Prepared in the event of terrorist attack on campus	Yes, I am well prepared	29	22
	I am somewhat prepared	39	29.6
	I am not prepared at all	56	42.4
	Not sure	8	6
Awareness of the guideline steps/actions to take in the event of a terrorist engaging in open fire	Yes, I am aware	38	28.8
	I am slightly aware	34	25.8
	No, I am not aware	56	42.4
	Not sure	4	3
Best course of action to take in the event of a terrorist engaging in open fire on campus	Hide	61	46.2
	Run	35	26.5
	Fight	13	9.8
	Talk to the terrorist	0	0
	Use phone to call for help	17	12.9
	Use phone to post on social media	0	0
	Ignore the event if not close by	1	0.8
	Other	5	3.8
Awareness of guiding information on university website	Yes, I am aware	25	18.9
	I have heard something about it	16	12.1
	No, I was not aware	90	68.2
	Not sure	1	0.8
Importance of being well-informed and prepped in the event of a terrorist attack.	Extremely important	78	59.5
	Very Important	40	30.5
	Moderately important	5	3.8
	Slightly important	5	3.8
	Not at all important	3	2.4

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to present the results of the data gathered regarding the respondents' usage of media and the effects that may have on their perceptions on terrorism related

matters. The sample data suggests that the respondents in the study access terrorism related news-media various times weekly and on daily basis, and that online news-media sources are the primary source of information. The amount of media use has some effect on the respondent perceptions of terrorism and who the primary target of terrorism is. There seems to be no influence from the media on perceptions of what the primary motivation of terrorism is and perceptions of terrorists. 28.4% of the sample believes another domestic terrorist attack is extremely likely, however they are not sure exactly when that would be.

Homegrown terrorists alone and grouped with international terrorist organizations are perceived to pose the most threat to the US. Roughly half of the sample are not aware of the current domestic threat level to the US, however majority are divided between elevated or guarded. 59% of the sample sees the domestic terror threat as significant or very significant. Amount of media use seems to influence the perception of likelihood of another terrorist attack among the sample, as those who indicated media use of three times or more weekly or daily also indicated another domestic terrorist attack to be extremely likely. Media use seems to have very little to no influence on the timeframe perception, threat level or perceived significance of the threat posed by domestic terrorism.

Overall the respondents indicated that they think about terrorism after they have watched/heard/read news about terrorism, and that they think about being a victim of terrorism either following a terrorist attack, watched/heard/read news about terrorism or they do not think about it all. The results, further suggest that the respondents either experience slight fear or no fear at all after they watched/heard/read news about terrorism. Media use seems to have some impact on how often the respondents think about terrorism and being a victim of terrorism. Those who have more frequent access to terrorism related news-media also report daily thoughts about

terrorism or being a victim of terrorism. Generally, when the respondents watched/heard/read news about terrorism, they either thought about terrorism or being a victim of terrorism. In addition, media use has no effect on safety perception and influence on the respondents decision to purposefully avoid crowded and public places due to the likelihood of a terrorist attack.

Most of the respondents believe that a terrorist attack on campus is slightly likely. Nearly half of the respondents indicated that they are not prepared for such an event and that they do not know about the guiding information on how to respond in such situation. More than half of the respondents did not know that the university provides such information on their website. In the event of a terrorist attack on campus, majority of the respondents indicated that they would either hide or run. Overall, just over half of the respondents think it is extremely important to be well informed and prepared in the event of a terrorist attack on campus and 30% indicated that it is very important.

The following chapter discusses in detail the findings of the study, implications, limitations and recommendations for further study.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The current research aimed to examine and measure whether terrorism continues to be highly feared and overpredicted, whether exposure to mass or news media influences perceptions of terrorism, whether mass media remains a significant source of information on terror related matters and whether the respondents feel prepared to act in the event of a terrorist attack. The sample data suggests that: (1) overall frequent media usage has some influence on perceptions of terrorism and who the primary target of terrorism is, however there is no media influence on perceived motivation of terrorism and perceptions of terrorists, (2) amount of terrorism related media use influences perception about the likelihood of a terrorist attack, and has some impact on frequency of thoughts about terrorism and being a victim of terrorism. However, there is very limited to no influence on timeframe perceptions, perceived threat level, significance of the threat posed by domestic terrorism, safety perceptions and daily actions, (3) the primary source for terrorism related information is online news-media, and (4) the majority of respondents are not well prepared in the event of a terrorist attack and minority are aware of the guiding information available from the university.

Most of the respondents reported to access terrorism related news-media either once, twice or more than four times on weekly basis, and those with more frequent media use, access the information once a day. The most reported source for terrorism related information was online news-media, followed by televised news media, indicating that traditional news-media sources remain as the primary source of information. Social media use is limited and only a small percent of the sample uses it to access information on terrorism related matters. Those who do use it, indicated Facebook as the most widely used source. In addition, some of the respondents indicated

that they do not access any terrorism related news-media. Current research in the field of study shows that news media continues to be a primary source of information where with prolonged and constant reporting on terrorism, it influences and skews public view of terrorism related matters through the use of metaphors (Chermak, 2003; Egnoto et al, 2016; Iqbal, 2015). Common metaphors used by the media when reporting on terrorism related matters include: act of war, criminal, uncivilized evil, inhumane or simply evil and that terrorism is aimed at the American way of life and culture (Spencer, 2012).

The current study, concurs with recent research (Chermak, 2003; Egnoto et al, 2016; Iqbal, 2015; Jackson et al, 2011; Spencer, 2012) on the influence the media has on perceptions of terrorism related matters. Results of the current study suggest that those who reported higher amount of access to terrorism related news media, had different perceptions of terrorism related matters compared to those who reported less frequent access. Respondents with more frequent use tend to select metaphors commonly used by the media to define terrorism and who terrorism is aimed at, whereas those with less frequent media use or no use at all defined terrorism and who it is aimed it in accordance with the definition of terrorism in Title 18 of the United States Code, Chapter 113B §2331. Respondents who reported weekly and daily usage of more than three times, defined terrorism as act of war, and the primary target of terrorism to be the American way of life and American Culture. In comparison, those who indicated less frequent media access, defined terrorism as political violence or uncivilized evil and indicated that the primary target of terrorism is the government. Similarly, those who reported no media use defined terrorism as either act of war or political violence and the primary target of terrorism to be the government. No matter the amount of media use, terrorists were defined as evil or inhumane, and primary motivations for terrorism were either spreading political agenda or causing fear in the public.

In addition, current research (Altheide, 2007; Chermak, 2003; Egnoto et al, 2016; Enache, 2012; Iqbal, 2015) further suggests that the prolonged exposure to news media reporting on terrorism related matters, creates a false sense of how serious and significant the threat is, false sense of the likelihood of a terrorist attack occurring, consequently leading to increased fear and feeling unsafe in public and crowded places. Generally, most recent research (Altheide, 2007; Bloch-Elkon, 2011; Braithwaite, 2013; Enache, 2012; Jenkins, 2017; LaFree et al, 2013, Nacos et al, 2008), indicates that the majority of the American population tend to show high levels of fear and overestimate the threat posed by terrorism.

The current study supports most recent research (Braithwaite, 2013; Jenkins, 2017; Nacos, et al 2008), as it found that frequent access to terrorism related news-media does lead to overestimation of the likelihood of a domestic terrorist attack in the US. Most respondents indicated that a terrorist attack in the US is either likely, very likely or extremely likely, however there is uncertainty as to when exactly that might take place. According to the data gathered, those who indicated frequent use of three times or more weekly and daily, indicated that the likelihood of a domestic terrorist attack is extremely likely, whereas most of the sample who indicated weekly and daily use of once or twice perceive the likelihood of an attack, as likely. Overall, the majority of the respondents who have average access to terrorism related news-media do not overestimate the likelihood of a terrorist attack, however those who do have more frequent access tend to overestimate the likelihood. Interestingly, those who reported no terrorism related media access, also reported the likelihood of another terrorist attack to be extremely likely. The overestimation of those who do not have access to terrorism related news media can be explained by the fact that terrorism has become a global phenomenon, and some would argue it has become a part of our daily lives, where we often hear about it not only from the media, but from friends, family,

colleagues and teachers (Frazzano & Snyder, 2014; Jenkins, 2017; Heath & Waymer, 2014). Our perception and understanding of terrorism can be influenced by external factors such as, popular culture, ideology and politics (Jenkins, 2006).

In relation to the threat perceptions and the significance of the threat, the sample data suggests that frequency of access to terrorism related news media has minimal to no influence, consequently contradicting current research (LaFree et al, 2013) in the field of study. Majority of the sample, no matter what frequency of media use was reported, indicated either domestic terrorists alone or grouped with international terrorist organizations to pose the most threat to the US. Similarly, media access had no influence on the knowledge about the National Terrorism Advisory System, or what the current domestic threat level is. Majority of the respondents, regardless of the amount of news media reported, indicated that the current threat level is either elevated or guarded. There is some media influence when access to terrorism related news media of three times or more on daily basis, and in this case, the threat level is perceived to be higher than it actually is. Those who reported higher amount of media use, reported the threat level as either high or guarded. This finding supports current research (Egnoto et al, 2016; Iqbal, 2015) which suggests that prolonged exposure to terrorism related news media, skews perception of the actual threat posed by terrorism. The significance of the threat posed by domestic terrorism was reported as either significant, very significant or highly significant. According to the sample data, the amount of access to terrorism related news-media has no influence over perceived significance of the threat posed by domestic terrorists to the US.

The current study further contradicts current research (Altheide, 2007; Bloch-Elkon, 2011; Egnoto et al, 2016; Enache, 2012; Iqbal, 2015) which states that prolonged media coverage of terrorism influences fear, perception of actual risk and increases anxiety. According to the sample

data, the amount of access to terrorism related news media has minimal to no influence over the levels of fear and safety experienced in relation to terrorism. On the other hand, the study did find some media influence on frequency of thought about terrorism and being a victim of terrorisms. Respondents who reported access to terrorism related news media of three times or more, on weekly and daily basis, indicated that they think about terrorism on daily basis and that they either do not think about being victim of terrorism (weekly access), or they think about it on daily basis (daily access). Whereas those who reported access to news-media once or twice weekly and daily, indicated that they think about terrorism on weekly basis, but they do not think about being a victim of terrorism. Those who reported no media use indicated that they think about terrorism and being a victim of terrorism only after a terrorist attack happens or they do not think about it at all. These findings support current research (Braithwaite, 2013; LaFree et al, 2013; Nacos et al, 2008) which states that individuals often disproportionately conclude that they will be a victim in a future terrorist attack. No matter the frequency of access to terrorism related news-media, majority of respondents reported that would think about terrorism and being a victim of terrorism after watching/reading/hearing news about terrorism.

Exposure to terrorism related news-media whether it is heard, watched or read, has some influence on the amount of fear experienced. Data from the current study shows that following exposure to terrorism relate news-media, most experienced either certain fear (24.8%), slight fear (34.6%) or no fear at all (28.6%) of terrorism. These numbers do support current research that media has influence over the amount of fear experienced in relation to terrorism, however the data also contradicts recent research (Bloch-Elkon, 2011; Braithwaite, 2013; Jenkins, 2017; LaFree et al, 2013, Nacos et al, 2008) which suggests that the majority have high levels of fear associated with terrorism.

In relation to the respondents' perception of safety in public and crowded places, approximately half of them (45.9%) indicated that they do not feel unsafe in those places and majority (72.9%) would not avoid them due the likelihood of a terrorist attack. Access to terrorism related news-media has minimal to no effect on safety perceptions. No media influence is observed, because no matter what amount of access, whether weekly, daily or no access at all to terrorism related news-media, the majority indicated that they do not feel unsafe in public and crowded places and that they do not purposefully avoid those places because of the likelihood of a terrorist attack. Some media influence is seen for those who reported media use of four times or more weekly and those who reported access once a day indicated that they do feel unsafe in crowded and public places and that they do purposefully avoid them due to the likelihood of a terrorist attack.

Just over half of the respondents (58.7%) indicated that they feel safe on campus, compared to the 12% who stated that they feel unsafe, which suggests that most of the respondents consider the campus to be a safe place where terrorism does not pose a significant threat. This is further reflected on the number of respondents (31.8%) who indicated that the likelihood of a terrorist attack on campus is slightly likely. Even though most of the respondents feel safe on campus, 90% of the respondents indicated that think it is either extremely important or very important to be well informed and prepared in the event of a terrorist attack on campus. However, the sample data shows that only 22% of the respondents are well prepared and 28.8% are aware of the appropriate actions to take in the event of a terrorist attack on campus. On the other hand, over half of the respondents (68.2%) are not aware of the guiding information provided by the university on the official school website. Overall the student population seems to be moderately prepared and informed.

Implications

Considering the lack of up-to-date research on public perceptions of terrorism and media influence, this research allows for a more current analysis. It further provides for a more up-to-date analysis of the respondents' media usage patterns and whether they are prepared in the event of a terrorist attack. The data collected from the survey, provides the opportunity for contemporary analysis on how the younger population (18-25 years of age) at a participating university perceives terrorism and where they get most of the information from. Specifically, has traditional media remained popular, or whether social media has taken over. The current research, further allowed for an analysis on whether there is a relationship between quantity of media usage, perceptions on terrorism related matters, threat perceptions and fear associated with terrorism. Overall, the study adds a present-day analysis to existing literature in the field of study of terrorism.

Certain aspects of the survey can be used by the participating university as an assessment tool of whether the students feel safe on campus, if they are aware that the university provides information on various appropriate responses in the event of a terrorist attack on campus and if they know where to access it. The survey provides the university with current data on campus safety perceptions. This information can be used by the university to improve on safety measures in order to make the student population feel safer on campus and in the classrooms.

By examining the respondents' knowledge on appropriate steps to take in the event of a terrorist attack and awareness of the guidance available to them, the survey further provides the university with a measure on how well they are spreading safety information and guidance. The respondents remain significantly unprepared in their view, and the majority remain unaware of the information available on the university website. Considering this, the university may consider adopting a different method in raising awareness and improving communication on the matter,

especially since 90% of the respondents reported that they think it is either extremely or very important to be well prepared and informed in the event of a terrorist attack on campus. This may include: regular emails with safety advise, increasing information availability and visibility, safety and advise talks, and training provided by the university police department on regular basis. Overall, the respondents feedback from the survey can be used by the participating university to assess whether or not they need to increase safety awareness, in order to better prepare the students in the event of a terrorist attack on campus and promote safety.

Limitations

As with any research, there are limitation which cannot be avoided. One of the limitations that this research is faced with, is the inability to generalize the sample data to the general population, due to the use of non-probability sampling, therefore the data gathered in the current research can only be applied to the sample itself and those who enrolled with the one college surveyed. However, despite the generalizability issues, the current study is able to provide more recent data on current perceptions of terrorism, the threat it poses, levels of fear associated with it and whether the media has aided in shaping those particular beliefs. A further generalizability limitation, is that the current study took place in North Texas, which may not be the same for other parts of Texas or other states. Geographic location, size and history of the city or town the respondents reside in, can have an influence on their attitudes and perceptions (National Geographic, 2018).

A third limitation that the study faces is social desirability bias, which can occur when the respondents answers the questions in the survey based on what they think is the correct or appropriate response, rather than what they actually believe. This can have detrimental effects to

the validity of the research. This limitation cannot be eliminated as there is no way to control for or know whether the respondents are completely truthful when answering the questions in the survey. Another limitation of the study is that it did not control for other influencing factors such as societal and cultural factors, or friends and family influences. This can affect the validity of the research because the answers given in the survey may not be solely due to media influence, but also outside factors.

The final limitation of the study is the low sample size of 135 respondents, which can be due to either or both, the low response rate and response bias. The survey was emailed to all currently enrolled students at the College of Health and Public Service ($N=3,574$) (Data, Analytics and Institutional Research. (2017). at the participating university, however it is impossible to know exactly how many of the students did receive the invitation email and how many of the students actually use their student email accounts. Response bias could have also been introduced by informing the students of the topic in question, consequently influencing who wishes to participate. There is a possibility that issues related to terrorism are perceived as sensitive, therefore many of the students may not wish to discuss their opinions related to the matter. On the other hand, the students may not see terrorism as a topic of interest or importance therefore did not wish to participate in the study, or simply did not wish to participate and dedicate their free time to completing the survey. The relatively low sample size can be due to any of the response rate and response bias factors discussed.

Future Research

Further research and more multi-variate analysis is needed to provide a more accurate and generalizable data. Studies should at least survey an entire university. Based on the topic of this

research, future studies should be conducted using a nationally representative sample.

Future studies may also focus on eliminating selection bias by adopting a random probability sampling method or a nationally representative sample. Even though non-probability sampling yields valid results (Farrokhi & Mahmoudi-Hamidabad, 2012; Maninder, 2016), it still runs the risk of selection bias and the data gathered is not generalizable to the general population, therefore by adopting random probability sampling, it eliminates selection bias and allows for the data to be generalized to the population. In addition, the current research only examined the perceptions of those who participated in the study, therefore providing only limited overview of perception in relation to terrorism matters.

Conclusion

The current study aimed to provide a more up-to-date analysis on various perceptions related to terrorism and whether news-media continues to influence these perceptions. The study did support current literature (Braithwaite, 2013; Chermak, 2003; Egnoto et al, 2016; Iqbal, 2015; Jackson et al, 2011; Jenkins, 2017; LaFree et al, 2013; Nacos et al, 2008; Spencer, 2012) as it found that frequent terrorism related news-media access (three times or more on weekly and daily basis) does have an influence on: perceptions of terrorism, perceptions of who terrorism is aimed at, overpredicting the likelihood of a domestic terrorist attack, the threat level posed, and the amount of fear experienced. Even though the study supported many elements in the current literature, some of the findings did contradict with current literature (Altheide, 2007; Block-Elkon, 2011; Egnoto et al, 2016; Enache, 2012; Iqbal, 2015; LaFree et al, 2013). The study found that access to terrorism related news-media had limited or no effect on: perceptions of terrorists, motivations of terrorism, who poses the most threat to the US, awareness of the National Terrorism

Advisory System, the current domestic terrorism threat level, the significance of the threat and perceptions about the safety of crowded and public places.

The current study found that (1) following media reports on terrorism related matters does influence the way people perceive terrorism and who it is aimed at, but has no influence on perceptions of terrorists and primary motivations, (2) those who followed terrorism news-media reporting on frequent basis (four times or more) do anticipate higher likelihood of a terrorist attack occurring and are more fearful, (3) mass media has remained the primary source of information on terrorism related events, either through online news-media reports or televised news, and (4) the majority of the student sample is not well prepared in the event of a terrorist attack and most remain unaware of the guiding information on what actions to take in such an event.

Overall the respondents seem to access terrorism related news-media on both weekly and daily basis. Those with frequent access tend to overestimate the likelihood of a domestic terrorist attack and the threat posed by terrorism and tend to show higher levels of fear associated with terrorism. The majority indicate average access of news-media of once or twice a week, or no use at all and they tend to not overestimate the likelihood of a terrorist attack, indicate some or no fear in relation to terrorism and tend to have more accurate perception of the current threat posed by terrorism.

APPENDIX A
DESIGNATED FOREIGN TERRORIST ORGANIZATION LIST

Date Designated	Name
10/8/1997	Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG)
10/8/1997	Aum Shinrikyo (AUM)
10/8/1997	Basque Fatherland and Liberty (ETA)
10/8/1997	Gama'a al-Islamiyya (Islamic Group) (IG)
10/8/1997	HAMAS
10/8/1997	Harakat ul-Mujahidin (HUM)
10/8/1997	Hizballah
10/8/1997	Kahane Chai (Kach)
10/8/1997	Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) (Kongra-Gel)
10/8/1997	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)
10/8/1997	National Liberation Army (ELN)
10/8/1997	Palestine Liberation Front (PLF)
10/8/1997	Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)
10/8/1997	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLF)
10/8/1997	PFLP-General Command (PFLP-GC)
10/8/1997	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)
10/8/1997	Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front (DHKP/C)
10/8/1997	Shining Path (SL)
10/8/1999	al-Qa'ida (AQ)
9/25/2000	Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU)
5/16/2001	Real Irish Republican Army (RIRA)
12/26/2001	Jaish-e-Mohammed (JEM)
12/26/2001	Lashkar-e Tayyiba (LeT)
3/27/2002	Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade (AAMB)
3/27/2002	Asbat al-Ansar (AAA)
3/27/2002	al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)
8/9/2002	Communist Party of the Philippines/New People's Army (CPP/NPA)
10/23/2002	Jemaah Islamiya (JI)
1/30/2003	Lashkar i Jhangvi (LJ)
3/22/2004	Ansar al-Islam (AAI)
7/13/2004	Continuity Irish Republican Army (CIRA)
12/17/2004	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (formerly al-Qa'ida in Iraq)
6/17/2005	Islamic Jihad Union (IJU)
3/5/2008	Harakat ul-Jihad-i-Islami/Bangladesh (HUJI-B)
3/18/2008	al-Shabaab
5/18/2009	Revolutionary Struggle (RS)
7/2/2009	Kata'ib Hizballah (KH)
1/19/2010	al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)
8/6/2010	Harakat ul-Jihad-i-Islami (HUJI)
9/1/2010	Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP)
11/4/2010	Jundallah
5/23/2011	Army of Islam (AOI)
9/19/2011	Indian Mujahedeen (IM)
3/13/2012	Jemaah Anshorut Tauhid (JAT)

5/30/2012	Abdallah Azzam Brigades (AAB)
9/19/2012	Haqqani Network (HQN)
3/22/2013	Ansar al-Dine (AAD)
11/14/2013	Boko Haram
11/14/2013	Ansaru
12/19/2013	al-Mulathamun Battalion
1/13/2014	Ansar al-Shari'a in Benghazi
1/13/2014	Ansar al-Shari'a in Darnah
1/13/2014	Ansar al-Shari'a in Tunisia
4/10/2014	ISIL Sinai Province (formally Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis)
5/15/2014	al-Nusrah Front
8/20/2014	Mujahidin Shura Council in the Environs of Jerusalem (MSC)
9/30/2015	Jaysh Rijal al-Tariq al Naqshabandi (JRTN)
1/14/2016	ISIL-Khorasan (ISIL-K)
5/20/2016	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant's Branch in Libya (ISIL-Libya)
6/30/2016	Al-Qa'ida in the Indian Subcontinent
8/16/2017	Hizbul Mujahideen (HM)

Source: Department of State. (2017). *Foreign Terrorist Organizations*. Retrieved from:

<https://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/other/des/123085.htm>

APPENDIX B
TRAVEL BAN COUNTRY LIST

COUNTRY	IMMIGRATION	NONIMMIGRANT TRAVEL
Syria	✗ Banned	✗ All visas banned
North Korea	✗ Banned	✗ All visas banned
Iran	✗ Banned	✗ All banned, except student visas
Chad	✗ Banned	✗ Business and tourist visas banned
Libya	✗ Banned	✗ Business and tourist visas banned
Yemen	✗ Banned	✗ Business and tourist visas banned
Somalia	✗ Banned	✓ Additional scrutiny for all visa applicants
Venezuela	✓ Allowed	✗ Business and tourist visas banned for leaders and families

Source: White House

THE WASHINGTON POST

Cameron, D. (2017, October 18). Why Trump's latest travel ban included these eight countries. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from:

https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2017/national/permanent-travel-ban/?utm_term=.a75b8ca6bae2

APPENDIX C
RESEARCH VARIABLES AND CODING

Section I: Demographics data

Variable	Question	Answer
Confirmation that participant is over the age of 18	Are you the age of 18 or over?	1 = Yes (survey starts) 2 = No (survey automatically ends)
Demographic 1	What is your current age?	*field to insert current age*
Demographic 2	Which age group do you fall under?	1 = 18 – 44 2 = 45 - 64 3 = 65+
Demographic 3	What is your gender?	1 = Male 2 = Female
Demographic 4	What is your ethnicity?	1 = Hispanic or Latino 2 = Not-Hispanic or Latino
Demographic 5	What is your race?	1 = White 2 = Black or African American 3 = American Indian or Alaska Native 4 = Asian 5 = Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander 6 = Other
Demographic 6	What is your current level of study?	0 = Freshman 1 = Sophomore 2 = Junior 3 = Senior 4 = Graduate Student

Section II: Amount of and type of news media followed

Variable	Question	Answers
Amount of news media followed 1	How many times a week do you watch/follow news media reports related to terrorism? *If responded indicates ‘I do not watch/follow any’ will be taken straight to Section III of the survey*	1 = I do not watch/ follow any 2 = Once 3 = Twice 4 = Three time 5 = More than four times
Amount of news media followed 2	How many times a day do you watch/follow news media reports related to terrorism?	1 = Once 2 = Twice 3 = Three time 4 = More than four times

Variable	Question	Answers
Type of news media followed 1	Which of the following news media sources do you use/follow to find out information on terrorism related matters? (choose the one that you use/follow the most)	1 = Online news media reports 2 = Televised news media 3 = Newspapers 4 = Radio news 5 = Social media 6 = Other
Type of news media followed 2	Which of the following news media sources would you go to first, to find out information about terrorism related matters?	1 = Fox news 2 = NBC news 3 = CNN news 4 = ABC news 5 = CBC news 6 = MSNBC news 7 = Other 8 = None of the above, I use social media.
Type of news media followed 3	Which of the following social media platforms do you use for information on terrorism related matters?	1 = Facebook 2 = Twitter 3 = Snapchat 4 = Instagram 5 = Other

Section III: Perceptions of terrorism and terrorists

Variable	Question	Answers
Perception of terrorism 1	In your opinion, which of the following primarily describes what terrorism is?	1 = Act of war 2 = Criminal 3 = Uncivilized evil 4 = Cowardly 5 = Political violence 6 = Simply violent 7 = Justified 8 = Other
Perception of terrorist 1	In your opinion, which of the following primarily describes what a terrorist is?	1 = Evil 2 = Animal 3 = Inhumane 4 = Cowards 5 = Sick 6 = Insurgent 7 = Jihadist 8 = Other
Perception of terrorism 2	In your opinion, who do you believe terrorism is aimed at?	1 = The public/ ordinary citizens 2 = The Government

Variable	Question	Answers
		3 = The Military 4 = The American way of life and American culture 5 = Other
Perception of terrorism 3	In your opinion, what is the primary motivation of terrorism?	1 = Intimidate and coerce government 2 = Cause fear in the public 3 = Cause mass casualty/fatality/death 4 = Cause mass destruction 5 = Spreading a political message / agenda 6 = Religion 7 = Other

Section IV: Perceived threat of terrorism

Variable	Question	Answers
Threat perception 1	In your opinion, what is the likelihood of another terrorist attack occurring in America?	1 = Unlikely 2 = Somewhat likely 3 = Likely 4 = Very likely 5 = Extremely likely 6 = Not sure
Threat perception 2	In your opinion, when do you think there will be another domestic/homegrown terrorist attack in America?	1 = Within the next 2 weeks 2 = Within the next month 3 = Within the next 6 months 4 = Within the next year 5 = Not sure
Threat perception 3	In your opinion, who do you believe poses more threat to the US?	1 = Homegrown/ domestic terrorist 2 = International terrorist organizations 3 = Both pose equal threat 4 = Not sure
Threat perception 4	Are you aware of the National Terrorism Advisory System maintained by the Department of Homeland Security?	1 = Yes 2 = No 3 = Not sure
Threat perception 5	Are you aware of the current domestic terrorist threat level to the United States?	1 = Yes 2 = No 3 = Not sure

Variable	Question	Answers
Threat perception 6	In your opinion, what do you think is the current threat level posed to the United States by homegrown/ domestic terrorists?	1 = Low 2 = Guarded 3 = Elevated 4 = High 5 = Severe 6 = Not sure
Threat perception 7	In your opinion, how significant do you think the threat posed by homegrown / domestic terrorism is to the US?	1 = Not significant 2 = Somewhat significant 3 = Significant 4 = Very significant 5 = Highly significant 6 = Not sure

Section V: Fear levels

Variable	Question	Answers
Levels of fear 1	How often do you think about terrorism?	1 = I do not think about it 2 = Daily 3 = Weekly 4 = Monthly 5 = Only when a terrorist attack occurs 6 = Only after watching / reading/ hearing news about terrorism.
Levels of fear 2	How often do you think about being a victim of terrorism?	1 = I do not think about it 2 = Daily 3 = Weekly 4 = Monthly 5 = Only when a terrorist attack occurs 6 = Only after watching / reading / hearing news about terrorism.
Levels of fear 3	When you watch /read/listen to stories about terrorism, what level of fear do you experience?	1 = I do not experience any fear 2 = Experience slightly fear 3 = Experience certain fear 4 = Experience extreme fear 5 = Not sure
Levels of fear 4	Do you feel unsafe in public and crowded places because of the likelihood of a terrorist attack?	1 = Yes 2 = No 3 = Maybe 4 = Not sure

Variable	Question	Answers
Levels of fear 5	Do you purposefully avoid public and crowded places because of the likelihood of a terrorist attack?	1 = Yes 2 = No 3 = Maybe 4 = Not sure
Levels of fear 6	Do you feel safe on campus and in your classrooms?	1 = Yes 2 = No 3 = Maybe 4 = Not sure

Section VI: Response Awareness

Variable	Question	Answers
Terrorism response awareness 1	In your opinion, how likely do you think it is for a terrorist attack to occur on campus?	1 = Extremely likely 2 = Moderately likely 3 = Slightly likely 4 = Neither likely nor unlikely 5 = Slightly unlikely 6 = Moderately unlikely 7 = Extremely unlikely
Terrorism response awareness 2	In your opinion, do you think you are well prepared in the event of a terrorist attack on campus?	1 = Yes, I am well prepared 2 = I am somewhat prepared 3 = I am not prepared at all 4 = Not sure
Terrorism response awareness 3	Are you aware of the guideline steps / actions you can take in the event of a terrorist attack, in particular when there is open fire?	1 = Yes, I am aware 2 = I am slightly aware 3 = No, I am not aware 4 = Not sure
Terrorism response awareness 4	In your opinion, in the event of a terrorist attack on campus where a terrorist engages in open fire, what is the best course of action?	1 = Hide 2 = Run 3 = Fight 4 = Talk to the terrorist 5 = Use your phone to call for help 6 = Use your phone to post on social media 7 = Ignore the even if not in close proximity 8 = Other
Terrorism response awareness 5	Are you aware that on the university website, you can access guiding information on how to respond in the event of a terrorist engaging in an open fire on campus?	1 = Yes, I am aware 2 = I have heard something about it 3 = No I was not aware 4 = I am not sure

Variable	Question	Answers
Terrorism response awareness 6	In your opinion, how important do you think it is, to be well informed and prepared in the event of a terrorist attack?	1 = Extremely important 2 = Very important 3 = Moderately important 4 = Slightly important 5 = Not at all important

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